THE

HUGUENOT.

A TALE

OF

THE FRENCH PROTESTANTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"RICHELIEU," "THE GIPSY," "THE ROBBER,"
"ATTILA," "DARNLEY," &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

NEW-YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, 82 CLIFF-STREET.

1839.

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CHAPTER I.

THE COURT.

We must once more—following the course of human nature as it is at all times, but more especially as it then was, before all the great asperities of the world were smoothed and softened down, and one universal railroad made life an easy and rapid course from one end to another—we must once more then, following the common course of being, shift the scene, and bring before our readers a new part of the great panorama of that day. It was then at the lordly palace of Versailles, in the time of its greatest and most extraordinary splendour, when the treasures of a world had been ransacked to adorn its halls, and art and genius had been called in to do what riches had been unable to accomplish; while yet every chamber throughout the building flamed with those far-famed groups, cast in solid gold, the designs of which had proceeded from the pencil of Le Brun, and the execution of which had employed a thousand of the most skilful hands in France; while yet marble, and porphyry, and jasper shone in every apartment; and the rarest works, from every quarter of the world, were added to the richness of the other decorations: before, in short, the consequences of his own ambition, or his successor's faults and weaknesses, had stripped one splendid ornament from that extraordinary building, which Louis XIV. had erected in the noon of his splendour—it was then that took place the scene which we are about to describe.

The Count de Morseiul had scarcely paused even to take needful rest on his way from Poitou to Paris, and he had arrived late at night at the untenanted dwelling of his fathers in the capital. The Counts de Morseiul had ever preferred the country to the town; and though they possessed a large house in the Place Royale, which

then was, though it is now no longer, a fashionable part of the city; that house had become, as it were, merely the dwelling-place of some old officers and attendants, who happened to have a lingering fondness for the busy haunts of men which their lord shared not in. The old white-headed porter, as he opened the gate for his young master, stared with wonder and surprise to see him there, and nothing, of course, was found prepared for his reception. But the count was easily satisfied and easily pleased. Food could always be procured without any difficulty in the great capital of all eating, but repose was what the young count principally required; and, after having despatched a messenger to Versailles, to ask in due form an audience of the king as early as possible on the following morning, to cast himself on the first bed that could be got ready, and forgot in a few minutes all the cares, and sorrows, and anxieties which had accompanied him on his way to the capital.

The request for an audience was conveyed through the Marquis of Seignelai, with whom the count himself was well acquainted; and he doubted not that it would be granted immediately, if he had preceded, as he had every reason to believe he had, the ordinary courier from Poitou, bringing the news of the events which had taken place in that province. The letter of the young secretary, in return to his application, arrived the next morning; but it was cold and formal, and evidently written under the immediate dictation of the king. It merely notified to the count that, for the next three days, the time appointed by his majesty for business would be fully occupied; that, in the mean time, if the business which brought the count to Paris were important, he would communicate it to the minister under whose department it came. The note went on to add, that if the business were not one requiring immediate despatch, the young count would do well to come to Versailles, to signify the place of his abode at the palace, and to wait the monarch's leisure.

This was by no means the tone which Louis usually assumed towards one of the most gallant officers in his service; and while the count at once perceived that the king was offended with him on some account, he felt great difficulty in so shaping his conduct as to meet the exigency of the moment. As the only resource, he determined to see and interest Seignelai to obtain for him

a more speedy audience; and he had the greater hopes of so doing, inasmuch as that minister was known to be jealous of and inimical to Louvois, one of the great persecutors of the Protestants.

While he was pondering over these things, and preparing to set out immediately for Versailles, another courier from the court arrived, bearing with him a communication of a very different character, which, upon the whole, surprised the count even more than the former one had done. It contained a general invitation to all the evening entertainments of the court; specifying not only those to which the great mass of the French nobility were admitted as a matter of course, but the more private and select parties of the king, to which none in general but his own especial friends and favourites were ever invited.

This gave Albert of Morseiul fresh matter for meditation, but also some hope that the king, whom he believed to be generous and kind-hearted, had remembered the services he and his ancestors had rendered to the state, and had consequently made an effort to overcome any feeling of displeasure which he might have entertained in consequence of reports from Poitiers. He determined, however, to pursue his plan with regard to Seignelai, believing that it would be facilitated rather than otherwise by any change of feeling which had come over the monarch, and he accordingly proceeded to Versailles at once.

The secretary of state was not to be found in his apartments, but one of his attendants informed the count that, at that hour, he would find him alone in the gardens, and he accordingly proceeded to seek him with all speed. As he passed by the orangery, however, he heard the sound of steps and gay voices speaking, and, in a moment after, stood in the presence of the king himself, who had passed through the orangery and was now issuing forth into the gardens.

Louis was at this time a man of the middle age, above the ordinary height, and finely proportioned in all his limbs. Though he still looked decidedly younger than he really was, and the age of forty was perhaps as much as any one would have assigned him, judging from appearance, yet he had lost all the slightness of the youthful figure. He was robust, and even stout, though by no means corpulent, and the ease and grace with which

he moved showed that no power was impaired. His countenance was fine and impressive, though, perhaps, it might not have afforded to a very scrutinizing physiognomist any indication of the highest qualities of the human mind. All the features were good, some remarkably handsome, but in most there was some peculiar defect, some slight want, which took away from the effect of the whole. The expression was placable, but commanding, and grave rather than thoughtful; and the impression produced by its aspect was, that it was serious, less from natural disposition or intense occupation of mind, than from the consciousness that it was a condescension for that countenance to smile. The monarch's carriage, as he walked, also produced an effect somewhat similar on those who saw him for the first time. Every step was dignified, stately, and graceful; but there was something a little theatrical in the whole, joined with, or perhaps expressing, a knowledge that every step was marked and of importance.

The king's dress was exceedingly rich and costly; and certainly, though bad taste in costume was then at its height, the monarch, and the group that came close upon his steps, formed as glittering and gay an object as could be seen.

Among those who followed the king, however, were several ecclesiastics, and, to the surprise of the young Count de Morseiul, one of those on whom his eye first fell was no other than the Abbé Pelisson, in eager but low conversation with the Bishop of Meaux. Louis himself was speaking with a familiar tone alternately to the Prince de Marsillac and to the well-known financier Bechameil, whose exquisite taste in pictures, statues, and other works of art recommended him greatly to the monarch.

No sooner did the king's look rest upon the young Count de Morseiul, than his brow became as dark as a thunder-cloud, and he stopped suddenly in his walk. Scarcely had the count time to remark that angry expression, however, before it had entirely passed away, and a grave and dignified smile succeeded. It was a common remark, at that time, that the king was to be judged by those who sought him from his first aspect, and certainly, if that were the test in the present instance, his affection for the Count of Morseiul was but small.

Louis was conscious that he had displayed bad feelings more openly than he usually permitted himself to do; and he now hastened to repair that fault, not by affecting the direct contrary sentiments, as some might have done, but by softening down his tone and demeanour to the degree of dignified disapprobation, which they might naturally be supposed to have reached.

"Monsieur de Morseiul," he said, as the young nobleman approached, "I am glad, yet sorry, to see you. There are various reports that have reached me from Poitou tending to create a belief that you have been, in some degree, wanting in due respect to my will; and I should have been glad that the falsehood of those reports had been proved before you again presented yourself. Your services, sir, however, are not forgotten; and you have, on so many occasions, shown devotion, obedience, and gallantry, which might well set an example to the whole world, that I cannot believe there is any truth in what I have heard, and am willing, unless a painful conviction to the contrary is forced upon me, to look upon you, till the whole of this matter be fully investigated, in the same light as ever."

The king paused a moment as if for reply; and the Count de Morseiul gladly seized the opportunity of saying, "I came up post, sire, last night, from Morseiul, for the purpose of casting myself at your majesty's feet, and entreating you to believe that I would never willingly give you the slightest just cause for offence, in word, thought, or deed. I apprehended that some false or distorted statements, either made for the purpose of deceiving your majesty or originating in erroneous impressions, might have reached you concerning my conduct, as I know misapprehensions of my conduct had occurred in Poitiers itself. Such being the case, and various very painful events having taken place, I felt it my duty to beseech your majesty to grant me an audience, in order that I might lay before you the pure and simple facts, which I am ready to vouch for on the honour of a French gentleman. I am most desirous, especially with regard to the latter events which have taken place, that your majesty should be at once made aware of the facts as they really occurred, lest any misrepresentations should reach your ears, and prepare your mind to take an unfavourable view of acts which were performed in all loyalty, and with the most devoted affection to your majesty's person."

The young count spoke with calm and dignified boldness. There was no hesitation, there was no wavering, there was no apprehension, either in tone, manner, or words; and there was something in his whole demeanour which set at defiance the very thought of there being the slightest approach to falsehood or artifice in his nature. The king felt that it was so himself, notwithstanding many prejudices on all the questions which could arise between the count and himself. But his line of conduct by this time had been fully determined, and he replied, "As I caused you to be informed this morning, Monsieur de Morseiul, my arrangements do not permit me to give you so much time as will be necessary for the hearing of all you have to say for several days. In the mean while, however, fear not that your cause will be, in any degree, prejudged. We have already, by a courier arrived this morning, received full intelligence of all that has lately taken place in Poitou, and of the movements of some of our misguided subjects of the pretended reformed religion. We have ordered accurate information to be obtained upon the spot, by persons who cannot be considered as prejudiced, and we will give you audience as soon as such information has been fully collected. In the mean time, you will remain at the court, and be treated here in every respect as a favoured and faithful servant, which will show you that no unjust prejudice has been created; though it is not to be denied that the first effect of the tidings we received from Poitou was to excite considerable anger against you. However, you owe a good deal in those respects to Monsieur Pelisson, who bore witness to your having gallantly defended his life from a bad party of robbers, and to your having saved from the flames a commission under our hand, although that commission was afterward unaccountably abstracted. I hope to hear," the king continued, "of your frequenting much the society of Monsieur Pelisson, and our respected and revered friend the Bishop of Meaux, by which you may doubtless derive great advantage, and perhaps arrive at those happy results which would make it our duty, as well as our pleasure, to favour you in the very highest degree."

The meaning of Louis was too evident to be mistaken; and as the Count de Morseiul had not the slightest intention of encouraging even a hope that he would

abandon the creed of his ancestors, he merely bowed in reply, and the king passed on. The count was then about to retire immediately from the gardens, but Pelisson caught him by the sleeve as he passed, saying, in a low voice,

"Come on, Monsieur de Morseiul, come on after the king. Believe me, I really wish you well; and it is of much consequence that you should show, not only your attachment to his majesty by presenting yourself constantly at the court, but also that you are entering into none of the intrigues of those who are irritating him by opposition and cabals. You know Monsieur Bossuet, of course. Let us come on."

"I only know Monsieur Bossuet by reputation," replied the count, bowing to the bishop, who had paused also, and at the same time turning to follow the royal train. "I only know him by reputation, as who throughout France, nay, throughout Europe, does not?"

"The compliment will pass for Catholic, though it comes from a Protestant mouth," said one of two gentlemen who had been obliged to pause also by the halt of the party before them. But neither Bossuet nor the count took any notice, but walked on, entering easily into conversation with each other; the eloquent prelate, who was not less keen and dexterous than he was zealous and learned, accommodating himself easily to the tone of the young count.

Pelisson, ere they had gone far, was inclined to have drawn the conversation to religious subjects, and was a little anxious to prove to the Count de Morseiul that, at the bottom, there was very little real difference between the Catholic and the Protestant faith, from which starting-point he intended to argue, as was his common custom, that as there was so little difference, and as in all the points of difference that did exist the Catholics were in the right, it was a bounden duty for every Protestant to renounce his heretical doctrines and embrace the true religion.

Bossuet, however, was much more politic, and resisted all Pelisson's efforts to introduce such topics, by cutting across them immediately, and turning the conversation to something less evidently applicable to the Count de Morseiul. Something was said upon the subject of Jansenism, indeed, as they walked along; and Bossuet replied, smiling,

"Heaven forbid that those discussions should be renewed! I abhor controversy, and always avoid it except when driven to it. I am anxious indeed, most anxious, that all men should see and renounce errors, and especially anxious, as I am in duty bound, when those errors are of such a nature as to affect their eternal salvation. But very little good, I doubt, has ever been done by controversy, though certainly still less by persecution; and if we were to choose between those two means, controversy would of course be the best. Unfortunately, however, it seldom ends but as a step to the other."

There was something so moderate and so mild in the language of the prelate, that the young count soon learned to take great pleasure in his discourse; and after these few brief words concerning religion, the Bishop of Meaux drew the conversation to arts and sciences, and the great improvements of every kind which had taken place in France under the government of Louis XIV.

They were still speaking on this subject when the king turned at the end of the terrace, and with surprise saw the Count de Morseiul in his train, between Pelisson and Bossuet. A smile of what appeared to be dignified satisfaction came over the monarch's countenance, and as he passed he asked,

"What are you discussing so eagerly, Monsieur de Meaux?"

"We are not discussing, sire," replied the bishop, "for we are all of one opinion. Monsieur de Morseiul was saying that in all his knowledge of history—which we know is very great—he cannot find one monarch whose reign has produced so great a change in society as that of Louis the Great."

The king smiled graciously and passed on. But the same sarcastic personage, who followed close behind the party to which the count had attached himself, added to Bossuet's speech, almost loud enough for the king to hear, "Except Mohammed! Except Mohammed, Monsieur de Meaux!"

It was impossible either for the bishop, or the count, or Pelisson, to repress a smile; but the only one of the party who turned to look was the count, the others very well knowing the voice to be that of Villiers, whose strange method of paying court to Louis XIV. was by abusing everything on which the monarch prided him-

self. He was slightly acquainted with the Count de Morseiul, having met him more than once on service, and, seeing him turn his head, he came up and joined them.

"You spoil that man, all of you," he said, speaking of the king. "All the world flatters him, till he does not know what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad, what is beautiful and what is ugly. Now, as we stand here upon this terrace," he continued, "and look down over those gardens, is there anything to be seen on the face of the earth more thoroughly and completely disgusting than they are? Is it possible for human ingenuity to devise anything so mathematically detestable? One would suppose that La Hire, or Cassini, or some of the other clockmakers, had been engaged with their villanous compasses in marking out all those rounds, and triangles, and squares, so that the whole park and gardens, when seen from my little room (which the king, in his immense generosity, gave me in the garret story of the palace), look exactly like a dusty leaf torn out of Euclid's Elements, with all the problems demonstrated upon it. Then, Monsieur de Morseiul, do pray look at those basins and statues. Here you have a set of black tadpoles croaking at an unfortunate woman in the midst, as black as themselves. There you have a striking representation of Neptune gone mad—perhaps it was meant for a storm at sea; and certainly, from the number of people death-sick all round, and pouring forth from their mouths into the basins, one might very easily conceive it to be so. There is not one better than another, and yet the king walks about among them all, and thinks it the finest thing that ever was seen upon the face of the earth, and has at this moment five-and-twenty thousand men working hard, to render it, if possible, uglier than before."

The Count de Morseiul smiled; and although he acknowledged that he loved the fair face of the country, unshaven and unornamented, better than all that art could do, yet he said that, for the gardens of such a palace as that of Versailles, where solemn and reposing grandeur was required, and regular magnificence more than picturesque beauty, he did not see that better could have been done.

Thus passed the conversation, till the king, after having taking another turn, re-entered the building, and his

courtiers quitted him at the foot of the staircase. The count then inquired of Pelisson where he could best lodge in Versailles, and the abbé pointed out to him a handsome house, very near that in which the Bishop of Meaux had taken up his abode for the time.

"Do you intend to come speedily to Versailles?" demanded the bishop.

"As I understood the king," replied the count, "it is his pleasure that I should do so; and, consequently, I shall merely go back to Paris to make my arrangements, and then return hither with all speed. I propose to be back by seven or eight o'clock this evening if this house is still to be had."

"For that I can answer," replied the bishop. "The only disagreeable thing you will find here is a want of food," he added, laughing, "for the palace swallows up all; but if you will honour me by supping with me to-night, Monsieur le Comte, perhaps Monsieur Pelisson will join us, with one or two others, and we may spend a calm and pleasant evening in talking over such things as chance or choice may select. We do so often in my poor abode. But indeed I forgot; perhaps you may prefer going to the theatre at the palace, for this is one of the nights when a play is performed there."

"No, indeed," replied the count. "I hold myself not only flattered, but obliged, by your invitation, Monsieur de Meaux, and I will not fail to be with you at any hour you appoint."

The hour was accordingly named; and, taking his leave, the young Count de Morseiul sought his horses and returned to Paris. His visit to Versailles, indeed, had not been so satisfactory as he could have wished; and while Jerome Riquet was making all the preparations for his master's change of abode, the count himself leaned his head upon his hand, and revolved in deep thought all the bearings of his present situation.

No one knew better than he did that appearances are but little to be trusted at any court, and as little as in any other at the court of Louis XIV. He knew that the next word from the king's mouth might be an order to conduct him to the Bastile, and that very slight proofs of guilt would be required to change his adherence to his religion, if not into a capital crime, at least into a pretext for dooming him to perpetual imprisonment. He saw, also, though perhaps not to the full extent of

the king's design, that Louis entertained some hopes of his abandoning his religion; and he doubted not that various efforts would be employed to induce him to do so; efforts difficult to be parried, painful to him to be the object of, and which might, perhaps, afford matter for deep offence if they proved ineffectual.

He saw, and he knew too, that it was decidedly the resolution of the king and of his advisers to put down altogether the Protestant religion in France; that there was no hope, and there was no chance of mitigating, in any degree, the unchangeable spirit of intolerance.

All these considerations urged the young count to pursue a plan which had suggested itself at first to his mind, rather as the effect of despair than of calculation. It was to go back no more to Versailles; to return post-haste to Poitou; to collect with all speed the principal Protestants who might be affected by any harsh measures of the court; to demand of Clémence de Marly the fulfilment of her promise to fly with him; and, embarking with the rest at the nearest port, to seek safety and peace in another land.

The more he thought over this design, the more he was inclined to adopt it; for although he evidently saw that tidings of what had taken place at the preaching in the desert had already reached the king's ears, and that the first effect was passed, yet he could not rely by any means upon the sincerity of the demeanour assumed towards him, and believed that even though he—if his military services were required—might be spared from political considerations, yet the great majority of the Protestants might be visited with severe inflictions on account of the part they had taken in the transactions of that day.

One consideration alone tended to make him pause ere he executed this purpose, which was, that, having undertaken a task, he was bound to execute it, and not to shrink from it while it was half completed; and though anxious to do what he considered right in all things, he feared that, by flying, he might but be able to protect a few, while by remaining he might stand between many and destruction.

In this world we ponder and consider, and give time, and care, and anxiety, and thought to meditation over different lines of conduct, while calm, imperturbable fate stands by till the appointed moment, and then,

out inquiring the result, decides the matter for us. The count had sent a servant immediately after his return from Versailles to the house of Marshal Schomberg, to inquire whether that officer were in Paris, and, if so, at what hour he would be visible. The servant returned bringing word that Marshal Schomberg had quitted the country; that his house and effects had been sold; and that it was generally supposed he never intended to return.

This was an example of the prompt execution of a resolution, which might well have induced the Count de Morseiul to follow it, especially as it showed Schomberg's opinion to be that the affairs of the Protestants in France were utterly irretrievable, and that the danger to those who remained was imminent. Thus was another weight cast into the scale; but even while he was rising from the table at which he sat, in order to give directions for preparing for a still longer journey than that which he had notified to his servants before, Jerome Riquet entered the room and placed before him a note, written in a hand with which he was not at all acquainted.

"You have thought much of my conduct strange, Albert—" it began; and, turning at once to the other page, he saw the name of Clémence. "You have thought much of my conduct strange, and now will you not think it still stranger, when I tell you that I have but two moments to write to you, and not even a moment to see you? I looked forward to to-morrow with hope and expectation; and now I suddenly learn that we are to set off within an hour for Paris. The order has been received from the king: the duke will not make a moment's delay; for me to stay here alone is, of course, impossible; and I am obliged to leave Poitou without seeing you, without the possibility even of receiving an answer. Pray write to me immediately in Paris. Tell me that you forgive me for an involuntary fault; tell me that you forgive me for anything I may have done to pain you. I say so because your last look seemed to be reproachful; and yet believe me when I tell you, upon my honour, that I could not but act as I have acted.

"Oh, Albert! if I could but see you in Paris! I, who used to be so bold—I, who used to be so fearless, now feel as if I were going into a strange world, where

there is need of protection, and guidance, and direction. I feel as if I had given up all control over myself; and if you were near me, if you were in Paris, I should have greater confidence, I should have greater courage, I should have more power to act, to speak, even to think rightly, than I have at present. Come, then, if it be possible; come, then, if it be right; and if not, at all events write to me soon, write to me immediately.

"May I—yes, I may, for I feel it is true—call myself

"Your CLEMENCE."

The letter was dated on the very day that the count himself had set off, and had evidently been sent over to the chateau of Morseiul shortly after his departure. Maître Riquet had contrived to linger in the room on one pretext or another while his master read the note, and the count, turning towards him, demanded eagerly how it had come and who had brought it.

"Why, monseigneur," replied the man, "the truth is, I always love to have a little information. In going through life I have found it like a snuffbox, which one should always carry; even if one does not take snuff one's self, it is so useful for one's friends!"

"Come, come, sir, to the point," said his master. "How did this letter arrive? that is the question."

"Just what I was going to tell you, my lord," replied the man. "I left behind me Pierre Martin to gather together a few stray things which I could not carry with me, and a few stray pieces of information which I could not learn myself, and to bring them after us to Paris with all speed; old doublets, black silk stockings, bottles of essence, cases of razors, true information regarding all the reports in the county of Poitou, and whatever letters might have arrived between our going and his coming."

"In the latter instance," replied the count, "you have done wisely, and more thoughtfully than myself. I do believe, Riquet, as you once said of yourself, you never forget anything that is necessary."

"You do me barely justice, sir," replied the man, "for I remember always a great deal more than is necessary; so, seeing that the letter was in a lady's hand, I brought it you, my lord, at once, without even waiting to look in at the end; which, perhaps, was imprudent, as very likely now I shall never be able to ascertain the contents."

"You are certainly not without your share of impudence, Maître Jerome," replied his master, "which I suppose you would say is among your other good qualities. But now leave me; for I must think over this letter."

Riquet prepared to obey; but, as he opened the door for his own exit, he drew two or three steps back, throwing it much wider, and giving admission to the Prince de Marsillac. His appearance did not by any means surprise the count; for, although he had seen him that very morning at Versailles, he had obtained not a moment to speak with him; and, as old friends, it was natural that, if anything brought the prince to Paris, he should call at the Hôtel de Morseiul, to talk over all that had taken place since their last meeting at Poitiers.

"My dear count," he said, "understanding from Monsieur de Meaux that you return to Versailles to-night, I have come to offer you a place down in my carriage, or to take a place in yours, that we may have a long chat over the scenes at Poitiers, and over the prospects of this good land of ours."

"Willingly," said the count. "I have no carriage with me, but I will willingly accompany you in yours. What time do you go?"

"As soon as you will," replied the prince. "I am ready to set out directly. I have finished all that I had to do in Paris, and return at once."

The count paused for a moment to calculate in his own mind whether it were possible that the Duc de Rouvré could reach Paris that night. Considering, however, the slow rate at which he must necessarily travel, accompanied by all his family, Albert of Morseiul saw that one, if not two days more, must elapse before his arrival.

"Well," he said, having by this time determined at all events to pause in the neighbourhood of the capital till after he had seen Clémence, "well, as I have not dined, old friend, I will go through that necessary ceremony, against which my man Riquet has doubtless prepared, and then I will be ready to accompany you."

"Nor have I dined either," replied the prince; "so if you will give a knife and fork to one you justly call an old friend, I will dine with you, and we will send for the carriage in the mean while."

There was something in the prince's tone and manner

difficult to describe or to explain, which struck the count as extraordinary. The calmest, the coolest, the most self-possessed man in France was a little embarrassed. But the count made no remark, merely looking for a moment in his face—somewhat steadfastly indeed, and in such a manner that the other turned to the window, saying, in a careless tone, "It was under those trees, I think, that the Duke of Guise killed Coligny."

The count made no reply, but called some of his attendants, and bade them see what had been provided for dinner. In a few minutes it was announced as ready, and he sat down with his friend to table, doing the honours with perfect politeness and cheerfulness. Before the meal was concluded, it was announced that the prince's carriage and servants had arrived, and, when all was ready, the Count de Morseiul proposed that they should depart, leaving his attendants to follow. Just as he had his foot upon the step of the carriage, however, the count turned to his friend, and said, "You have forgot, my good friend, to tell the coachman whether he is to drive to the Bastile, or Vincennes, or to Versailles."

"You mistake," said the prince, following him into the carriage: "To Versailles, of course. I will explain to you the whole matter as we go. Within ten minutes after you left Versailles this morning," he continued, as soon as they were once fully on the way, "I was sent for to the king about something referring to my post of Grand Veneur. I found Louvois with him in one of his furious and insolent moods, and the king bearing all with the utmost patience. It soon became apparent that the conversation referred to you, Louvois contending that you should never have been suffered to quit Versailles till some affairs that have taken place in Poitou were fully examined, declaring that you had only gone to Paris in order to make your escape from the country more conveniently. The king asked me my opinion; and I laughed at the idea to Louvois's face. He replied that I did not know all, or half, indeed; for that, if I did, I should not feel nearly so certain. I said I knew you better; and, to settle the matter at once, I added that, as I was going to Paris, I would undertake you came back with me in my carriage or I in yours. The king trusted me, as you see; and I thought it a great deal better to come in this manner as a friend than to let Louvois send you a *lettre de cachet*, which you might

even find a more tiresome companion than the Prince de Marsillac."

"Undoubtedly I should," replied the count, "and I thank you much for the interest you have taken in the affair, as well as for the candour of the confession. But now, my friend, since you have gone so far, go a little farther, and give me some insight, if you can, into what is taking place at the court just at present—I mean in reference to myself—for my situation is, as you may suppose, not the most pleasant; and is one in which a map of the country may be serviceable to me. I see none of my old friends about the court at present except yourself. Seignelai I have not been able to find—"

"And he would give you no information even if you did find him," replied the prince. "I can give you but very little, for I know but little. In the first place, however, let me tell you a great secret; that you are strongly suspected of being a Protestant."

"Indeed," replied the count; "I fear they have more than suspicion against me there."

"Confess it not," said his friend, "confess it not! for, just at present, it would be much more safe to confess high treason: but, in the next place, my dear count, a report has gone abroad—quite false, I know—that you are desperately in love with this fair Clémence de Marly."

"And pray," demanded the count, smiling, "in what manner would that affect me at the court, even were it true?"

"Why, now, to answer seriously," replied his friend, "though, remember, I speak only from the authority of my own imagination, I should say, that you are very likely to obtain her, with every sort of honour and distinction to boot, in spite of Hericourt and the Chevalier d'Evran, and all the rest, upon one small condition; which is, that you take a morning's walk into the Church of St. Laurent, or any other that may be more pleasant to you; stay about half an hour, read a set form, which means little or nothing, and go through some other ceremonies of the same kind."

"In fact," said the count, "make my renunciation in form, you mean to say."

The prince nodded his head, and Albert of Morseiul fell into thought, well knowing that his friend was himself ignorant of one of the most important considera-

tions of the whole; namely, the faith of Clémence de Marly herself. On that subject, of course, he did not choose to say anything; but, after remaining in thought for a few moments, he demanded:

"And pray, my good friend, what is to be the result if I do not choose to make this renunciation?"

"Heaven only knows," replied the prince. "There are, at least, six or seven different sorts of fate that may befall you. Probably the choice will be left to yourself; whether you will have your head struck off in a gentlemanly way in the court of the Bastile, or be broken on the wheel; though I believe that process they are keeping for the Huguenot priests now—ministers, as you call them. If the king should be exceeding merciful, the Castle of Pignerol or the prison in the Isle St. Marguerite may afford you a comfortable little solitary dwelling for the rest of your life. I don't think it likely that he should send you to the galleys, though I am told they are pretty full of military men now. But, if I were you, I would choose the axe: it is soonest over."

"I think I should prefer a bullet," said the count; "but we shall see, my good friend, though I can't help thinking your anticipations are somewhat more sanguinary than necessary. I hear that Schomberg has taken his departure, and it must have been with the king's permission. Why should it not be the same in my case? I have served the king as well, though, perhaps, not quite so long."

"But you are a born subject of France," replied the other; "Schomberg is not; and, besides, Schomberg has given no offence, except remaining faithful to his religion. You have been heading preaching in the open fields, they say, if not preaching yourself"

"Certainly not the last," replied the count.

"Indeed!" said his friend; "they have manufactured a story, then, of your having addressed the people before any one else."

"Good God!" exclaimed the count; "is it possible that people can pervert one's actions in such a manner? I merely besought the people to be orderly and tranquil, and added a hope that they had come unarmed as I had come."

"It would seem that a number of you were armed, however," said the prince, "for some of the dragoons were killed, it would appear; and, on my word, you

owe a good deal to Pelisson; for, if Louvois had obtained his way this morning, as usual, your head would have been in no slight danger. The abbé stepped in, however, and said that he had seen much of you in Poitou, and that, from all he had heard and seen, his majesty had not a more faithful or obedient subject in those parts."

"I am certainly very much obliged to him," replied the count. "But he has strangely altered his tone; for at Poitiers he would fain have proved me guilty of all sorts of acts that I never committed."

"Perhaps he may have had cause to change," replied the Prince de Marsillac. "It is known that he and St. Helie quarrelled violently before Pelisson's return. But, at all events, your great security is in the fact that there are two factions in the party who are engaged in putting down your sect. The one would do it by gentle means—bribery, corruption, persuasion, and the soft stringents of exclusion from place, rank, and emolument. The other breathes nothing but fire and blood, the destruction of rebels to the royal will, and the most signal punishment for all who differ in opinion from themselves. This last party would fain persuade the king that the Huguenots are in arms, or ready to take arms, throughout France, and that nothing is to be done but to send down armies to subdue them. But then the others come in and say, 'It is no such thing; the people are all quiet; they are submitting with a good grace, and, if you do not drive them to despair, they will gradually return, one by one, to the bosom of the mother church, rather than endure all sorts of discomfort and disgrace!' Of this party are Pelisson, the good bishop, and many other influential people; but, above all, Madame de Maintenon, whose power, in everything but this, is supreme."

"Had I not better see her," demanded the count, "and endeavour to interest her in our favour?"

"She dare not, for her life, receive you," replied the prince. "What is religion, or humanity, or generosity, or anything else to her if it stand in the way of ambition? No, no, Morseiul! the good lady may perhaps speak a kind word for you in secret, and when it can be put in the form of an insinuation; but she is no Madame de Montespan, who would have defended the innocent, and thrust herself in the way to prevent in-

justice, even if the blow had fallen upon herself. She dared to say to the king things that no other mortal dared, and would say them, too, when her heart or her understanding was convinced; but Madame de Maintenon creeps towards the crown, and dares not do a good action if it be a dangerous one. Do not attempt to see her, for she would certainly refuse; and if she thought that the very application had reached the king's ears, she would urge him to do something violent, merely to show him that she had nothing to do with you."

"She has had much to do with me and mine," replied the count, somewhat bitterly; "for to my father she and her mother owed support when none else would give it."

"She owed her bread to Madame de Montespan," replied the prince, "and yet ceased not her efforts till she had supplanted her. But," he added, after a pause, "she is not altogether bad, either; and it is not improbable that, if there be any scheme going on for converting you by milder means than the wheel, as I believe there is, she may be the deviser of it. She was in the room this morning when the business was taking place between the king, Louvois, and Pelisson. She said nothing, but sat working at a distance, the very counterpart of a piebald cat that sat dozing in the corner; but she heard all, and I remarked that, when the affair was settled and other things began, she beckoned Pelisson to look at her embroidery, and spoke to him for some minutes in a low voice."

"Morseiul, may I advise you?" the prince continued, after a brief interval had taken place in the conversation; "listen to me but one word! I know well that there is no chance of your changing your religion except upon conviction. Do not, however, enact the old Roman, or court too much the fate of martyrdom; but, without taking any active step in the matter, let the whole plans of these good folks, as far as they affect yourself, go on unopposed: let them, in short, still believe that it is not impossible to convert you. Listen to Pelisson—pay attention to Bossuet—watch the progress of events—be converted if you can: and, if not, you, at all events, will gain opportunities of retiring from the country with far greater ease and safety than at present, if you should be driven to such a step at

last. In the mean time, this affair of the preaching will have blown over, and they will not dare to revive it against you if they let it slumber for some time. Think of it, Morseiul! think of it!"

"I will," replied the count, "and thank you sincerely; and, indeed, will do all that may be done with honour not to offend the king or endanger myself;" and thus the conversation ended on that subject, the prince having said already far more than might have been expected from a courtier of Louis XIV.

CHAPTER II.

THE CLOUDS AND THE SUNSHINE.

The Count de Morseiul had just time to take possession of his new abode, and make himself tolerably at his ease therein, before the hour arrived for proceeding to the house of the Bishop of Meaux, where he was received by the prelate with every sort of kindness.

He arrived before anybody else, and Bossuet took him by the hand, saying, with a smile, "Some of our good clergy, Monsieur de Morseiul, would perhaps be scandalized at receiving in their house so distinguished a Protestant as yourself; but I trust you know, what I have always endeavoured to prove, that I look upon all denominations of Christians as my brethren, and am only, perhaps, sometimes a little eager with them, out of what very likely you consider an *over-anxiety*, to induce them to embrace those doctrines which I think necessary to their salvation. Should it, even be so between you and me, Monsieur le Comte, will you forgive me?"

"Willingly," replied the count, thinking that the work of conversion was about to begin; but, to his surprise, Bossuet immediately changed the conversation, and turned it to the subject of the little party he had invited to meet the count.

"I have not," he said, "made it, as indeed I usually do, almost entirely of churchmen; for I feared you might think that I intended to overwhelm you under

ecclesiastical authority; however, we have some belonging to the church, whom you will be glad to meet, if you do not know them already. The Abbé Renaudot will be here, who has a peculiar faculty for acquiring languages, such as I never knew in any one but himself. He understands no less than seventeen foreign languages, and twelve of these he speaks with the greatest facility. That, however, is one of his least qualities, as you may yourself judge when I tell you, that in this age, where interest and ambition swallow up everything, he is the most disinterested man that perhaps ever lived. Possessed of one very small, poor benefice, which gives him a scanty subsistence, he has constantly refused every other preferment; and no persuasion will induce him to do what he terms, 'encumber himself with wealth.' We shall also have La Broue, with whose virtues and good qualities you are already acquainted. D'Herbelot also wrote yesterday to invite himself. He has just returned from Italy, where that reverence was shown to him which generous and expansive minds are always ready to display towards men of genius and of learning. He was received by the Grand Duke at Florence, and treated like a sovereign prince, though merely a poor French scholar. A house was prepared for him, the secretary of state met him, and, as a parting present, a valuable library of oriental manuscripts was bestowed upon him by the duke himself. To these grave people we have joined our lively friend Pelisson, and one whom doubtless you know, Boileau Despréaux. One cannot help loving him and being amused with him, although we are forced to acknowledge that his sarcasm and his bitterness go a good deal too far. When he was a youth, they tell me he was the best-tempered boy in the world, and his father used to say of him that all his other children had some sharpness and some talent; but that, as for Nicholas, he was a good-natured lad, who would never speak ill of any one. One thing, however, I must tell you to his honour. He obtained some time ago, as I lament to say has frequently been done, a benefice in the church without being an ecclesiastic. The revenues of the benefice he spent, in those his young days, in lightness if not in vice. He has since changed his conduct and his views, and not long ago not only resigned the benefice, but paid back from his

own purse all that he had received, to be spent in acts of charity among the deserving of the neighbourhood. This merits particular notice and record."

Bossuet was going on to mention several others who were likely to join their party, when two of those whom he had named arrived, and the others shortly after made their appearance. The evening passed, as such an evening may well be supposed to have passed at the dwelling of the famous Bishop of Meaux. It was cheerful, though not gay; and subjects of deep and important interest were mingled with, and enlivened by, many a light and lively sally, confined within the bounds of strict propriety, but none the less brilliant or amusing, for it is only weak and narrow intellects that are forced to fly to themes painful, injurious, or offensive, in order to seek materials with which to found a reputation for wit or talent.

The only matter, however, which was mentioned affecting at all the course of our present tale, and therefore the only one on which we shall pause, was discussed between Pelisson and the Abbé Renaudot, while the Count de Morseiul was standing close by them, speaking for a moment with D'Herbelot.

"Is there any news stirring at the court, Monsieur Pelisson?" said Renaudot. "You hear everything, and I hear nothing of what is going on there."

"Why, there is nothing of any consequence, I believe," said Pelisson, in a loud voice. "The only thing now I hear of is, that Mademoiselle Marly is going to be married at length."

"What, La belle Clémence!" cried Renaudot. "Who is the man that has touched her hard heart at length?"

"Oh, an old lover," said Pelisson. "Perseverance has carried the day. The Chevalier d'Evran is the man. The king gave his consent some few days ago, the chevalier having come up express from Poitou to ask it."

Every word reached the ear of the Count de Morseiul, and his mind reverted instantly to the conduct of the Chevalier and Clémence, and to the letter which he had received from her. As any man in love would do under such circumstances, he resolved not to believe a word; but, as most men in love would feel, he certainly felt himself not a little uneasy, not a little agitated, not a little pained even by the report. Unwilling, how-

ever, to hear any more, he walked to the other end of the room to take his leave, as it was now late.

Pelisson looked after him as he went, and seeing him bid Bossuet adieu, he followed his example, and accompanied the young count down the stairs and throughout the few steps he had to take ere he reached his own dwelling. No word, however, was spoken by either regarding Clémence de Marly; and Albert of Morseiul retired at once, though certainly not to sleep. He revolved in his mind again and again the probability of Pelisson's story having any truth in it. He knew Clémence, and he knew the chevalier, and he felt sure that he could trust them both; but that trust was all that he had to oppose to the very great likelihood which there existed that the king, as he so frequently did, would take the arrangement of a marriage for Clémence de Marly into his own hands, without in the slightest degree consulting her inclination or the inclination of any one concerned.

The prospect now presented to the mind of Albert of Morseiul was in the highest degree painful. Fresh difficulties, fresh dangers were added to the many which were already likely to overwhelm him, if even, as he trusted she would, Clémence held firm by her plighted troth to him, and resisted what was then so hard to resist in France, the absolute will of the king. Still this new incident would only serve to show that instant flight was more absolutely necessary than before, would render any return to France utterly impossible, and would increase the danger and difficulty of executing that flight itself. But a question suggested itself to the count's mind, which, though he answered it in the affirmative, left anxiety and doubt behind it. Would Clémence de Marly resist the will of the king? Could she do so? So many were the means to be employed to lead or drive her to obedience, so much might be done by leading her on from step to step, that bitter, very bitter anxiety took possession of her lover's heart. He persuaded himself that it was pain and anxiety on her account alone; but still he loved her too well, too truly, not to feel pained and anxious for himself.

On the following morning, as soon as he had breakfasted, he wrote a brief note to Clémence, telling her that he was at Versailles, was most anxious to see her and converse with her, if it were but for a few minutes,

and beseeching her to let him know immediately where he could do so speedily, as he had matters of very great importance to communicate to her at once. The letter was tender and affectionate, but still there was that in it which might show the keen eyes of love that there was some great doubt and uneasiness pressing on the mind of the writer.

As soon as the letter was written he gave it into the hands of Jerome Riquet, directing him to carry it to Paris, to wait there for the arrival of the family of De Rouvré, if they had not yet come, and to find means to give it to Maria, the attendant of Mademoiselle de Marly. He was too well aware of Riquet's talents not to be quite sure that this commission would be executed in the best manner; and, after his departure, he strove to keep his mind as quiet as possible, and occupied himself in writing to his intendant at Morseiul, conveying orders for his principal attendants to come up to join him at Versailles directly, bringing with them a great variety of different things which were needful to him, but which had been left behind in the hurry of his departure. While he was writing, he was again visited by the Prince de Marsillac, who came in kindly to tell him that the report of Pelisson, who had passed the preceding evening with him, seemed to be operating highly in his favour at court.

"I am delighted," he said, "that the good abbé has had the first word, for St. Helie is expected to-night, and, depend upon it, his story would be very different. It will not be listened to now, however," he continued; "and every day gained, depend upon it, is something. Take care, however, count," he said, pointing to the papers on the table, "take care of your correspondence; for though the king himself is above espionage, Louvois is not, I can tell you; and unless you send your letters by private couriers of your own, which might excite great suspicion, every word is sure to be known."

"I was going to send this letter by a private courier," said the count; "but, as it is only intended to order up the rest of my train from Poitou, and some matters of that kind, I care not if it be known to-morrow."

"If it be to order up your train," replied the prince, "send it through Louvois himself. Write him a note instantly, saying, that as you understand he has a courier going, you will be glad if he will despatch that let-

ter. It will be opened, read, and the most convincing proof afforded to the whole of them that you have no intention of immediate flight, which is the principal thing they seem to apprehend. With this, clinching the report of Pelisson, you may set St. Helie at defiance, I should think."

The count smiled. "Heaven deliver me from the intrigues of a court," he said. He did, however, as he was advised; and the Prince de Marsillac carried off the letter and the note, promising to have them delivered to Louvois immediately.

Several hours then passed anxiously; and although he knew that he could not receive an answer till two or three o'clock, and might, perhaps, not receive one at all that day, he could not help thinking the time long, and marking the striking of the palace clock, as if it must have gone wrong for his express torment. The shortest possible space of time, however, in which it was possible to go and come between Versailles and Paris had scarcely expired after the depafture of Riquet, when the valet again appeared. He brought with him a scrap of paper, which proved to be the back of the count's own note to Clémence, unsealed, and with no address upon it; but written in a hasty hand within was found,

"I cannot, I dare not, see you at present, nor can I now write as I should desire to do. If what you wish to say is of immediate importance, write as before, and it is sure to reach me."

There was no signature, but the hand was that of Clémence de Marly; and the heart of Albert of Morseiul felt as if it would have broken. It seemed as if the last tie between him and happiness was severed. It seemed as if that hope, which would have afforded him strength, and support, and energy to combat every difficulty and overleap every obstacle, was taken away from him; and for five or ten minutes he paced up and down the saloon in agony of mind unutterable.

"She is yielding already," he said at length, "she is yielding already. The king's commands are hardly announced to her ere she feels that she must give way. It is strange, it is most strange! I could have staked my life that with her it would have been otherwise! and yet the influence which this Chevalier d'Evran seems always to have possessed over her is equally

strange. If, as she has so solemnly told me, she is not really bound to him by any tie of affection, may she not be bound by some promise rashly given in former years? We have heard of such things. However, no promise to me shall stand in the way; she shall act freely, and at her own will, as far as I am concerned;" and, sitting down, he wrote a few brief lines to Clémence, in which, though he did not pour out the bitterness of his heart, he showed how bitterly he was grieved.

"The tidings I had to tell you," he said, "were simply these, which I heard last night. The king destines your hand for another, and has already announced that such is the case. The few words that you have written show me that you are already aware of this fact, and that, perhaps, struggling between promises to me and an inclination to obey the royal authority, you are pained, and uncertain how to act. Such, at least, is the belief to which I am led by the few cold, painful words which I have received. If that belief is right, it may make you more easy to know that, in such a case, Albert of Morseiul will never exact the fulfilment of a promise that Clémence de Marly is inclined to break."

He folded the note up, sealed it, and once more called for Riquet. Before the man appeared, however, some degree of hesitation had come over the heart of the count, and he asked him,

"Who did you see at the Hôtel de Rouvré?"

"I saw," replied the man, "some of the servants; and I saw two or three ecclesiastics looking after their valises in the court; and I saw Madame de Rouvré looking out of one of the windows with Mademoiselle Clémence, and the Chevalier d'Evran."

"It is enough," said the count. "I should wish this note taken back to Paris before nightfall, and given into the hands of the same person to whom you gave the other. Take some rest, Riquet. But I should like that to be delivered before nightfall."

"I will deliver it, sir, and be back in time to dress you for the *appartement*."

"The *appartement*," said the count; "I had forgotten that, and most likely shall not go. Well," he added, after a moment's thought, "better go there than to the Bastile. But it matters not, Riquet, Jean can dress me."

The man bowed and retired. But by the time that it

was necessary for the count to commence dressing for the *appartement*, Riquet had returned, bringing with him, however, no answer to the note, for which, indeed, he had not waited. The count suffered him to arrange his dress as he thought fit, and then proceeded to the palace, which was by this time beginning to be thronged with company.

During one half of the life of Louis XIV. he was accustomed to throw open all the splendid public rooms of his palace three times in the week to all the chief nobility of his court and capital, and everything that liberal, and even ostentatious, splendour could do to please the eye, delight the ear, or amuse the mind of those who were thus collected, was done by the monarch on the nights which were marked for what was called *appartement*. At an after period of his life, when the death of almost all his great ministers had cast the burden of all the affairs of state upon the king himself, he seldom, if ever, appeared at these assemblies, passing the hours, during which he furnished his court with amusement, in labouring diligently with one or other of his different ministers.

At the time we speak of, however, he almost every night showed himself in the *appartement* for some time, noticing everybody with affability and kindness, and remarking, it was said, accurately who was present and who was not. It was considered a compliment to the monarch never to neglect any reasonable opportunity of paying court at these assemblies; and it is very certain that, had the Count de Morseiul failed in presenting himself on the present occasion, his absence would have been regarded as a decided proof of disaffection.

He found the halls below, then, filled with guards and attendants; the staircase covered with officers, and guests arriving in immense crowds; while from the first room above poured forth the sound of a full orchestra, which was always the first attraction met with during the evening, as if to put the guests in harmony, and prepare their minds for pleasure and enjoyment. The music was of the finest kind that could be found in France, and no person ever rendered himself celebrated, even in any remote province, for peculiar skill or taste in playing on any instrument, without being sought out and brought to play at the concerts of the king. The concert-room, which was the only one where the light

was kept subdued, opened into a long suite of apartments, hall beyond hall, saloon beyond saloon, where the eye was dazzled by the blaze, and fatigued by the immense variety of beautiful and precious ornaments which were seen stretching away in brilliant perspective. Here tables were laid out for every sort of game that was then in fashion, from billiards to lansquenet; and the king took especial pains to make it particularly known to every person at his court, that it was not only his wish, but his especial command, if any man found anything wanting, or required anything whatever for his amusement or pleasure in the apartments, that he was to order some of the attendants to bring it.

Perfect liberty reigned throughout the whole saloons, as far as was consistent with propriety of conduct. The courtiers made up their parties among themselves, chose their own amusements, followed their own pursuits. Every sort of refreshment was provided in abundance, and hundreds on hundreds of servants, in splendid dresses, were seen moving here and there throughout the rooms, supplying the wants and fulfilling the wishes of all the guests with the utmost promptitude, or waiting for their orders, and remarking, with anxious attention, that nothing was wanting to the convenience of any one.

The whole of the principal suite of rooms in the palace was thus thrown open, as we have said, three times in the week, with the exception of the great ballroom, which was only opened on particular occasions. Sometimes, at the balls of the court, the *appartement* was not held, and the meeting took place in the ballroom itself. But at other times the ball followed the supper of the king, which took place invariably at ten o'clock, and the company invited proceeded from the *appartement* to the ballroom, leaving those whose age, health, or habits gave them the privilege of not dancing, to amuse themselves with the games which were provided on the ordinary nights.

Such was to be the case on the present evening, and such as we have described was the scene of splendour which opened upon the eyes of the Count de Morseiul as he entered the concert-room, and, taking a seat at the end, gazed up the gallery, listening with pleasure to a calm and somewhat melancholy, but soothing strain of music. His mind, indeed, was too much occupied

with painful feelings of many kinds for him to take any pleasure or great interest in the magnificence spread out before his eyes, which he had indeed often seen before, but which he might have seen again with some admiration had his bosom been free and his heart at rest.

At present, however, it was but dull pageantry to him, and the music was the thing that pleased him most; but when a gay and lively piece succeeded to that which he had first heard, he rose and walked on into the rooms beyond, striving to find amusement for his thoughts, though pleasure might not be there to be found. Although he was by no means a general frequenter of the court, and always escaped from it to the calmer pleasures of the country as soon as possible, he was, of course, known to almost all the principal nobility of the realm, and to all the officers who had in any degree distinguished themselves in the service. Thus, in the very first room, he was stopped by a number of acquaintances; and, passing on amid the buzz of many voices, and all the gay nothings of such a scene, he met from time to time with some one whose talents, or whose virtues, or whose greater degree of intimacy with himself enabled him to pause and enter into longer and more interesting conversation, either in reference to the present—its hopes and fears—or to the period when last they met, and the events that then surrounded them.

Although such things could not, of course, cure his mind of its melancholy, it afforded him some degree of occupation for his thoughts, till a sudden whisper ran through the rooms of "The King! The King!" and everybody drew back from the centre of the apartments to allow the monarch to pass.

Louis advanced from the inner rooms with that air of stately dignity, which we know, from the accounts both of his friends and enemies, to have been unrivalled in grace and majesty. His commanding person, his handsome features, his kingly carriage, and his slow and measured step, all bespoke at once the monarch, and afforded no bad indication of his character, with its many grand and extensive, if not noble qualities, its capaciousness, its ambition, and even its occasional littleness, for the somewhat theatrical demeanour was never lost, and the stage effect was not less in Louis's mind than in his person.

He paused to speak for a moment with several persons as he passed, stood at the lansquenet table where his brother and his son were seated, dropped an occasional word, always graceful and agreeable, at two or three of the other tables, and then paused for a moment and looked up and down the rooms, evidently feeling himself, what his people believed him to be, the greatest monarch that ever trod the earth. There was something, indeed, it must be acknowledged, in the mighty splendour of the scene around—in the inestimable amount of the earth's treasures there collected—in the blaze of light, the distant sound of the music, the dazzling loveliness of many there present—the courage, the learning, the talent, the genius collected in those halls; and in the knowledge that there was scarcely a man present who would not shed the last drop of his heart's blood in the defence of his king—there was something that might well turn giddy the brain of any man who felt himself placed on that awful pinnacle of power and greatness. Louis, however, was well accustomed to it, and, like the child and the lion, he had become familiar from youth with things which might make other men tremble. Thus he paused but for a moment to remark and to enjoy, and then advanced again through the apartments.

The next person that his eye fell upon was the Count de Morseiul; and his countenance showed in a moment how true had been the prophecy of the Prince de Marsillac, that a great change would take place in his feelings. He now smiled graciously upon the young count, and paused to speak with him.

"I trust to see you often here, Monsieur de Morseiul," he said.

"I shall not fail, sire," the count replied, "to pay my duty to your majesty as often as I am permitted to do so."

"Then you do not return soon to Poitou, Monsieur le Comte?" said the king.

"I have thought it so improbable that I should do so, sire," replied the count, who evidently saw that Louvois had not failed to report his letter, "that I have taken a hotel here, and have sent for my attendants this day. If I hoped that my presence in Poitou could be of any service to your majesty—"

"It may be, it may be, count, in time to come," re-

plied the king. "In the mean time we will try to amuse you well here. I have heard that you are one of the best billiard-players in France. Follow me now to the billiard-room, and, though I am out of practice, I will try a stroke or two with you."

It was a game in which Louis excelled, as, indeed, he did in all games; and this was one which afterward, we are told, made the fortune of the famous minister, Chamillart. The Count de Morseiul, therefore, received this invitation as a proof that he was very nearly re-established in the king's good graces. He feared not at all to compete with the monarch, as he himself was also out of practice, and, indeed, far more than the king; so that, though an excellent player, there was no chance of his being driven either to win the game against the monarch, or to make use of some manœuvre to avoid doing so. He followed the king, then, willingly; but Louis, passing through the billiard-room, went on in the first place to the end of the suite of apartments, noticing everybody to whom he wished to pay particular attention, and then returned to the game. A number of persons crowded round—so closely, indeed, that the monarch exclaimed,

"Let us have room, let us have room! We will have none but the ladies so close to us: Ha, Monsieur de Morseiul?"

The game then commenced, and went on with infinite skill and very nearly equal success on both parts. Louis became somewhat eager, but yet a suspicion crossed his mind that the young count was purposely giving him the advantage, and at the end of some very good strokes he purposely placed his balls in an unfavourable position. The count did not fail to take instant advantage of the opportunity, and had wellnigh won the game. By an unfortunate stroke, however, he lost his advantage, and the king never let him have the table again till he was himself secure.

"You see, Monsieur de Morseiul," he said, as he paused for a moment afterward, "you see you cannot beat me."

"I never even hoped it, sire," replied the count. "In my own short day I have seen so many kings, generals, and statesmen try to do so with signal want of success, that I never entertained so presumptuous an expectation."

The monarch smiled graciously, well pleased at a compliment from the young Huguenot nobleman which he had not expected; and as the game was one in which he took great pleasure, and which also displayed the graces of his person to the greatest advantage, he played a second game with the count, which he won by only one stroke. He then left the table, and, after speaking once more with several persons in the apartments, retired, not to reappear till after his supper.

As soon as he was gone, the Prince de Marsillac once more approached the young count, saying in a whisper, "You have not beaten the king, Morseiul, but you have conquered him: yet, take my advice, on no account leave the apartments till after the ball has begun. Let Louis see you there, for you know what a marking eye he has for every one who is in the rooms."

Thus saying, he passed on, and the count determined to follow his advice, though the hour and a half that was yet to elapse seemed tedious, if not interminable to him. About a quarter of an hour before the supper of the king, however, as he sat listlessly leaning against one of the columns, he saw a party coming up from the concert-room at a rapid pace, and long before the eye could distinctly see of what persons it was composed, his heart told him that Clémence de Marly was there.

She came forward, leaning on the arm of the Duc de Rouvré, dressed with the utmost splendour, and followed by a party of several others who had just arrived. She was certainly not less lovely than ever. To the eyes of Albert de Morseiul, indeed, it seemed that she was more so: but there was an expression of deep sadness on that formerly gay and smiling countenance, which would have made the whole feelings of the Count de Morseiul change into grief for her grief, and anxiety for her anxiety, had there not been a certain degree of haughtiness throned upon her brow and curling her lips, which bespoke more bitterness than depression of feeling. The Duc de Rouvré was, as I have said, proceeding rapidly through the rooms, and paused not to speak with any one. The eyes of Clémence, however, fell full upon the Count de Morseiul, and rested on him with their full melancholy light, while she noticed him with a calm and graceful inclination of the head, but passed on without a word.

The feelings of the Count de Morsieul were bitter in-

deed, as may well be imagined. "So soon," he said to himself, "so soon! By heavens, I can understand now all that I have heard and wondered at: how, for a woman—an empty, vain, coquettish woman—a man may forget the regard of years, and cut his friend's throat as he would that of a stag or boar. Where is the Chevalier d'Evran, I wonder? He does not appear in the train to-night; but perhaps he comes not till the ball. I will wait, however, the same time as if she had not been here."

He moved not from his place, but remained leaning against the column; and, as is generally the case, not seeking, he was sought for. A number of people who knew him gathered round him; and although he was in anything but a mood for entertaining or being entertained, the very shortness of his replies, and the degree of melancholy bitterness that mingled with them, caused words that he never intended to be witty to pass for wit, and protracted the torture of conversing with indifferent people upon indifferent subjects, when the heart is full of bitterness, and the mind occupied with its own sad business.

At length the doors of the ballroom were thrown open, and the company poured in to arrange themselves before the monarch came. Several parties, indeed, remained playing at different games at the tables in the gallery, and the count remained where he was, still leaning against the column, which was at the distance of ten or twelve yards from the doors of the ballroom. Not above five minutes had elapsed before the king and his immediate attendants appeared, coming from his private supper-room to be present at the ball. His eye, as he passed, ran over the various tables, making a graceful motion with his hand for the players not to rise; and as he approached the folding doors, he remarked the count, and beckoned to him to come up. The count immediately started forward, and the king demanded,

"A gallant young man like you, do you not dance, Monsieur de Morseiul?"

Taken completely by surprise at this piece of condescension, the count replied,

"Alas, sire, I am not in spirits to dance; I should but cloud the gayety of my fair partner, and she would wish herself anywhere else before the evening were over."

Louis smiled; and, so much accustomed as he was to attribute the sunshine and clouds upon his courtiers' brows to the effects of his favour or displeasure, he instantly put his own interpretation upon the words of the count, and that interpretation raised the young nobleman much in the good graces of a monarch, who, though vain and despotic, was not naturally harsh and severe.

"If, Monseiur de Morseiul," he said, "some slight displeasure which the king expressed yesterday morning have rendered our gay fellow-soldier of Maestricht and Valenciennes so sad, let his sadness pass away, for his conduct here has effaced unfavourable reports; and if he persevere to the end in the same course, he may count upon the very highest favour."

Almost every circumstance combines on earth to prevent monarchs hearing the truth, even from the most sincere. Time, place, and circumstance are almost always against them; and in the present instance, the Count de Morseiul knew well that neither the spot nor the moment was at all suited to anything like an explanation. He could but reply, therefore, that the lightest displeasure of the king was of course enough to make him sad, and end his answer by one of those compliments which derive at least half their value, like paper money, from the good-will of the receiver.

"Come, come," said the king, gayly; "shake off this melancholy, fellow-soldier. Come with me; and, if I have rightly heard the secrets of certain hearts, I will find you a partner this night who shall not wish herself anywhere else while dancing with the Count de Morseiul."

The count gazed upon the king with utter astonishment; and Louis, enjoying his surprise, led the way quickly on into the ballroom, the count following, as he bade him, close by his side, and among his principal officers. As soon as they had entered the ballroom, Louis paused for an instant, and every one rose. The king's eyes, as well as those of the Count de Morseiul, ran round the vast saloon seeking for some particular object. To Albert of Morseiul that object was soon discovered, placed between the Duchess de Rouvré and Annette de Marville, at the very farthest part of the room. Louis, however, who was in good spirits, and in a mood peculiarly condescending, walked round the whole circle, pausing to speak to almost every married lady there,

and twice turning suddenly towards the count, perhaps with the purpose of teazing him a little, but seemingly as if about to point out the lady to whom he had alluded. At length, however, he reached the spot where the Duchess de Rouvré and her party were placed; and after speaking for a moment to the duchess, while the cheek of Clémence de Marly became deadly pale and then glowed again fiery red, he turned suddenly towards her, and said,

"Mademoiselle de Marly, or perhaps, as I in gallantry ought to say, *Belle Clémence*, I have promised the Count de Morseiul here to find him a partner for this ball who will dance with him throughout to-night without wishing herself anywhere else. Now, as I have certain information that he is very hateful to you, there is but one thing which can make you execute the task to the full. Doubtless you, as well as all the rest of our court, feel nothing so great a pleasure as obeying the king's commands—at least, so they tell me—and therefore I command you to dance with him, and to be as happy as possible, and not to wish yourself anywhere else from this moment till the ball closes."

He waited for no reply, but, making a sign to the count to remain by the side of his fair partner, proceeded round the rest of the circle. Nothing in the demeanour of Clémence de Marly but her varying colour had told how much she was agitated while the king spoke; but the words which the monarch had used were so pointed, and touched so directly upon the feelings between herself and Albert of Morseiul, that those who stood around pressed slightly forward as soon as Louis had gone on, to see how she was affected by what had passed. To her ear those words were most strange and extraordinary. It was evident that by some one the secret of her heart had been betrayed to the king, and equally evident that Louis had determined to countenance that love which she had fancied would make her happy in poverty, danger, or distress, announcing his approbation at the very moment that a temporary coldness had arisen between her and her lover, and that her heart was oppressed with those feelings of hopelessness which will sometimes cross even our brightest and happiest days.

On the Count de Morseiul the king's words had produced a different, but not a less powerful effect. The surprise and joy which he might have felt at finding

himself suddenly pointed out by the monarch as the favoured suiter for the hand of her he loved, was well-nigh done away by the conviction that the price the king put upon his ultimate approbation of their union was such as he could not pay. But nevertheless those words were most joyful, though they raised up some feeling of self-reproach in his heart. It was evident that the tale told by Pelisson regarding the chevalier was false, or perhaps, indeed, originated in some pious fraud, devised for the purpose of driving him more speedily to acknowledge himself a convert to the Church of Rome. Whatever were the circumstances, however, it was clear that Clémence was herself unconscious of any such report, and that all the probabilities which imagination had built up to torment him were but idle dreams. He had pained himself enough indeed; but he had pained Clémence also, and his first wish was to offer her any atonement in his power.

Such were the feelings and thoughts called up in the bosom of the young count by the events which had just occurred. But the surprise of Clémence and her lover was far outdone by that of the Duke and Duchess de Rouvré, who, astonished at the favour into which their young friend seemed so suddenly to have risen, and equally astonished at the intimation given by the king of an attachment existing between the count and Clémence, overflowed with joy and satisfaction as soon as the monarch left the spot, and expressed many a vain hope that, after all, the affairs which had commenced in darkness and shadow would end in sunshine and light. Ere the count could reply or say one word to Clémence de Marly, the *bransle* began, and he led her forth to dance. There was but a moment for him to speak to her; but he did not lose that moment.

"Clémence," he said, as he led her forward, "I fear I have both pained you and wronged you."

A bright and beautiful smile spread at once over her countenance. "You have," she said; "but those words are enough, Albert! Say no more! the pain is done away, the wrong is forgotten."

"It is not forgotten by me, sweet girl," he replied, in the same low tone; "but I must speak to you long, and explain all."

"Come to-morrow," she answered; "all difficulties must now be done away. I, too, have something to ex-

plain, Albert," she added, "but yet not everything that I could wish to explain, and about that I will make you my only reproach. You promised not to doubt me—oh, keep that promise!"

As she spoke the dance began, and, of course, their conversation for the time concluded. All eyes were upon the young count, so rare a visiter at the palace; and upon her, so admired, so courted, so disdainful, as she was believed to be by every one present, but whose destiny seemed now decided, and whose heart every one naturally believed to be won. Graceful by nature as well as by education, no two persons of the whole court could have been better fitted than Albert of Morseiul and Clémence de Marly to pass through the ordeal of such a scene as a court ball in those days; and though every eye was, as we have said, upon them, yet they had a great advantage on that night, which would have prevented anything like embarrassment, even had not such scenes been quite familiar to them. They scarcely knew that any eyes were watching them; they were scarcely conscious of the presence of the glittering crowd around. Engrossed by their own individual feelings—deep, absorbing, overpowering as those feelings were—their spirits were wrapped up in themselves and in each other; they thought not of the dance, they thought not of the spectators, but left habit, and natural grace, and a fine ear to do all that was requisite as far as the minuet was concerned. If either thought of the dance at all, it was only when the eyes of Albert of Morseiul rested on Clémence, and he thought her certainly more lovely and graceful than ever she had before appeared, or when his hand touched hers, and the thrill of that touch passed to his heart, speaking of love, and hope, and happiness to come. The effect was what might naturally be supposed; each danced more gracefully than perhaps they had ever done before; and one of those slight murmurs of admiration passed through the courtly crowd, and was confirmed by a gracious smile and gentle inclination of the head from the king himself.

"We must not let him escape us," said the monarch, in a low voice, to the Prince de Marsillac. "Certainly he is worthy of some trouble in recalling from his errors."

"If he escape from the fair net your majesty has

spread for him," replied the prince, "he will be the most cunning bird that ever I saw. Indeed, I should suppose he has no choice, when, if caught, he will have to thank his king for everything, for honour, favour, distinction, his soul's salvation, and a fair wife that loves him. If he be not pressed till he takes fright, he will entangle himself so that no power can extricate him."

"He shall have every opportunity," said the king. "I must not appear too much in the matter. You, prince, see that they be left alone together, if possible, for a few minutes. Use what manœuvre you will, and I will take care to countenance it."

At the court balls of that day it was the custom to dance throughout the night with one person, and the opportunity of conversing between those who were dancing was very small. A few brief words at the commencement or at the end of each dance was all that could be hoped for, and Clémence and her lover were fain to fix all their hopes of explanation and of longer intercourse upon the morrow. Suddenly, however, it was announced, before the hour at which the balls usually terminated, that the king had a lottery, to which all the married ladies of the court were invited.

The crowd poured into the apartment where the drawing of this lottery was to take place; every lady anxious for a ticket where all were prizes, and the tickets themselves given by the king; while those who were not to share in this splendid piece of generosity were little less eager, desirous of seeing the prizes, and learning who it was that won them. All then, as we have said, poured out of the ballroom, through the great gallery and other staterooms in which the *appartement* was usually held.

There were only two who lingered, Clémence de Marly and Albert of Morseiul. They, however, remained to the last, and then followed slowly, employing the few minutes thus obtained in low spoken words of affection, perhaps all the warmer and all the tenderer for the coldness and the pain just passed. Ere three sentences, however, had been uttered, the good Duc de Rouvré approached, saying, "Come, Clémence, come quick, or you will not find a place where you will see."

The eye of the Prince de Marsillac, however, was upon them; and, threading the mazes of the crowd, he took the duke by the arm, and, drawing him aside with

an important face, told him that the king wanted to speak with him immediately. The Duc de Rouvré darted quickly away to seek the monarch; and the prince paused for a single instant ere he followed, to say, in a low voice to the count,

"You will neither of you be required at the lottery, if you think that the lot you have drawn already is sufficiently good."

The count was not slow to understand the hint, and he gently led Clémence de Marly back into one of the vacant saloons.

"Surely they will think it strange," she said; but, ere the count could reply, she added quickly, "but, after all, what matters it if they do? I would have it so, that every one may see and know the whole so clearly that all persecution may be at an end. Now, Albert, now," she said, "tell me what could make you write me so cruel a letter."

"I will, in one word," he replied; "but remember, Clémence, that I own I have been wrong, and in telling you the causes, in explaining the various circumstances which led me to believe that you were wavering in your engagements to me, I seek not to justify myself, but merely to explain."

"Oh never, never think it!" she exclaimed, ere she would let him go on; "whatever may happen, whatever appearances may be, never, Albert, never for one moment think that I am wavering! Once more, most solemnly, most truly I assure you, that though perhaps fate may separate me from you, and circumstances over which we have no control render our union impossible, nothing—no, not the prospect of immediate death itself, shall ever induce me to give my hand to another. No circumstances can effect that, for that must be my voluntary act; and I can endure death, I can endure imprisonment, I can endure anything they choose to inflict, except the wedding a man I do not love. Now, tell me," she continued, "now let me hear, what could make you think I did so waver."

The count related all that had taken place, the words which he had heard Pelisson make use of in conversation with an indifferent person, the mortification and pain he had felt at the words she had written in answer to his note, the confirmation of all his anxious fears by what Jerome Riquet had told him, and all the other

probabilities that had arisen to make him believe that those fears were just.

Clémence heard him sometimes with a look of pain, sometimes with a reproachful smile. "After all, Albert," she said, "perhaps you have had some cause—more cause, indeed, than jealous men often have, and yet you shall hear how simply all this may be accounted for. The day after we parted in Poitou, the Abbé de St. Helie arrived at Ruffigny, with several other persons of the same kind, and Monsieur de Rouvré found his house filled with spies upon his actions. He received, however, in the evening of the same day, an order to come to the court immediately, to give an account of the events which had taken place in his government. The same spies of Louvois accompanied us on the road, as well as the Chevalier d'Evran, who was the person that had obtained from the king the order for the duke to appear at court, rather than to remain in exile at Ruffigny, while his enemies said what they chose of him in his absence. We had not arrived in Paris ten minutes at the time your servant came. We were surrounded by spies of every kind; the good duke was in a state of agitation impossible to describe, and so fearful that anything like a Protestant should be seen in his house, or that anything, in short, should occur to give probability to the charges against him, that I knew your coming would be dangerous both to yourself and to him, the house being filled with persons who were ready not only to report, but to pervert everything that took place. On receiving your note, Maria called me out of the saloon; but my apartments were not prepared; servants were coming and going; no writing paper was to be procured; a pen and ink was obtained with difficulty. I knew, if I were absent five minutes in the state of agitation that pervaded the whole household, Madame de Rouvré would come to seek me, and I was consequently obliged to write the few words I did write in the greatest haste and under the greatest anxiety. Maria was not even out of the room conveying those few words to your servant, when the duchess came in, and I was glad hypocritically to affect great activity and neatness about the arrangement of my apartments, to conceal the real matter which had employed me. Such is the simple state of the case; and I never even heard of this other marriage, about which Pelisson must

have made some mistake. Had I heard of it," she added, "it would only have made me laugh."

"I see not why it should do so," replied the count. "Surely Louis d'Evran is—as I well know he is considered by many of the fair and the bright about this court—a person not to be despised by any woman. He evidently, too, exercises great influence over you, Clémence; and therefore the report itself was not such as I, at least, could treat as absurd, especially when, in addition to these facts, it was stated that the king had expressed his will that you should give him your hand."

"To me, however, Albert," she replied, "it must appear absurd, knowing and feeling as I do know and feel, that, were the Chevalier d'Evran the only man I had ever seen or ever were likely to see, that I should never even dream of marrying him. He may be much loved and liked by other women; doubtless he is, and sure I am he well deserves it. I like him, too, Albert. I scruple not to own it; I like him much; but that is very different from loving him as I love—as a woman should love her husband, I mean to say. And now, Albert," she continued, "with regard to the influence he has over me, I will tell you nothing more. That shall remain as a trial of your confidence in me. This influence will never be exerted but when it is right. Should it be exerted wrongly, it is at an end from that moment. When you wished to accompany me to Ruffigny, from that terrible scene in which we last parted, he represented to me in few words how Monsieur de Rouvré was situated. He showed me that, by bringing you there at such a time from such a scene, I should but bring destruction on that kind friend who had sheltered and protected my infancy and my youth when I had none else to protect me. He showed me, too, that I should put an impassable barrier between you and me, for the time at least. He told me that no one but himself was aware of where I was, but that your accompanying me would instantly make it known to the whole world, and most likely produce the ruin of both. Now tell me, Albert, was he not right to say all this? Was not his view a just one?"

"It was," replied the count; "but yet he might have urged it in another manner. He might have explained the whole to me as well as to you: and still you leave unexplained, Clémence, how he should know where you

were when you had concealed it so well, so unaccountably well, from the family at Ruffigny."

"Oh! jealousy, jealousy," said Clémence, playfully; "what a terrible and extraordinary thing jealousy is! and yet, Albert, perhaps a woman likes to see a little of it when she really loves. However, you are somewhat too hard upon the chevalier, and you shall not wring from me any other secret just yet. You have wrung from me, Albert, too many of the secrets of my heart already, and I will not make you the spoiled child of love by letting you have altogether your own way. As to my concealing from the family of Ruffigny, however, where I was going on that occasion or on most others, it is very easily explained. Do you not know that, till I was foolish enough at Poitiers to barter all the freedom of my heart for love with but little confidence, it would seem, I have always been a tyrant instead of a slave? Are you not aware that I have always done just as I liked with every one? and one of my reasons for exercising my power to the most extreme degree was, that my religious faith might never be controlled? Till this fierce persecution of the Protestants began, and till the king made it his great object, and announced his determination of putting down all but the Roman Catholic faith in the realm, Mousieur de Rouvré himself cared but little for the distinction of Protestant and Catholic; and even had he known what I was doing, though he might have objected, would not have strongly opposed me. I established my right, however, of doing what I liked, and going where I liked, and acting as I liked, on such firm grounds, that it was not easily shaken. Even now, had I chosen to see you to-day in Paris, I might have done it; but would you have thought the better of Clémence if she had risked the fortunes of him who has been more than a father to her? Nobody would, and nobody should have said me nay, if I had believed that it was just and right to bid you come. But I thought it was wrong, Albert. Now, however, I may bid you come in safety to all; and now that I have time and opportunity to make any arrangements I like, I may safely promise, that, should any change come over the present aspect of our affairs, which change I fear must and will come, I will find means to see you at any time and under any circumstances. But hark! from what I hear, the lottery is

over, and the people departing. Let us go forward and join them, if it be but for a moment."

Thus saying, she rose, and the count led her on to the room where the distribution of the prizes had just taken place. Every one was now interested with another subject. A full hour had been given at the beginning of the evening to the affair of the Count de Morseiul and Mademoiselle de Marly, which was a far greater space of time, and far more attention than such a court might be expected to give, even to matters of the deepest and most vital importance. But no former impression could of course outlive the effect of a lottery. There was not one man or woman present whose thoughts were filled with anything else than the prizes and their distributions; and the head of even the good Duchess of Rouvré herself, who was certainly of somewhat higher character than most of those present, was so filled with the grand engrossing theme, that nothing was talked of as the party returned to Paris, but the prize which had fallen to the share of Madame de This, or the disappointment which had been met with by Madame de That; so that Clémence de Marly could lean back in the dark corner of the carriage, and enjoy her silence undisturbed.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOUR OF HAPPINESS.

At the levée of the king on the succeeding morning, the young Count de Morseiul was permitted to appear for a few minutes. The monarch was evidently in haste, having somewhat broken in on his matutinal habits in consequence of the late hour at which he had retired on the night before.

"They tell me you have a favour to ask, Monsieur de Morseiul," said the king. "I hope it is not a very great one, for I have slept so well and am in such haste, that perhaps I might grant it, whether it were right or wrong."

"It is merely, sire," replied the count, "to ask your

gracious permission to proceed to Paris this morning, in order to visit Mademoiselle de Marly. Not knowing when it may be your royal pleasure to grant me the longer audience which you promised for some future time, I did not choose to absent myself from Versailles without your majesty's consent."

Louis smiled graciously, for no such tokens of deference were lost upon him. "Most assuredly," he said, "you have my full permission: and, now I think of it—Bontems," he continued, turning to one of his *valets de chambre*, "bring me that casket that is in the little cabinet below—now I think of it, the number of our ladies last night fell short at the lottery, and there was a prize of a pair of diamond earrings left. I had intended to give them to La belle Clémence; but, somehow," he added, with a smile, "she did not appear in the room. Perhaps, however, you know more of that than I do, Monsieur de Morseiul! Oh, here is Bontems; give me the casket."

Taking out of the small ebony box which was now presented to him a little case containing a very handsome pair of diamond earrings, the king placed it in the hands of the young count, saying, "There, Monsieur de Morseiul, be my messenger to the fair lady. Give her those jewels from the king; and tell her that I hope, ere long, she will be qualified to draw prizes in some not very distant lottery by appearing as one of the married ladies of our court. She has tortured all our gallant gentlemen's hearts too long, and we will not suffer our subjects to be thus ill treated. Do you stay in Paris all day, Monsieur de Morseiul, or do you come here to witness the new opera?"

"I did not propose to do either, sire," replied the count: "I had, in fact, engaged myself to pass another pleasant evening at the house of Monsieur de Meaux."

"Indeed!" said the king, evidently well pleased. "That is all as it should be. I cannot but think, Monsieur de Morseiul, that if you pass many more evenings so well, either you will convert Monsieur de Meaux, which God forbid, or Monsieur de Meaux will convert you, which God grant."

The count bowed gravely; and as the king turned to speak with some one else who was giving him a part of his dress, the young nobleman took it as a permission to retire; and mounting his horse, which had been kept

ready saddled, he made the best of his way towards the capital.

That gay world, with its continual motion, was as animated then as now. Though the abode of the court was at Versailles, yet the distance was too small to make the portion of the population absolutely withdrawn from the metropolis at all important while all the other great bodies of the kingdom assembled or were represented there. Thousands on thousands were hurrying through the streets; the same trades and occupations were going on then as now, with only this difference, that at that period luxury, and industry, and every productive art had reached, if not its highest, at least its most flourishing point; and all things presented, even down to the aspect of the city itself, that hollow splendour, that tinselled magnificence, that artificial excitement, that insecure prosperity, the falseness of all and each of which had afterward to be proved, and which entailed a long period of fresh errors, bitter repentance, and terrible atonement.

But through the gay crowd the Count de Morseiul passed on, noticing it little, if at all. He was urged on his way by the strongest of all human impulses, by love—first, ardent, pure, sincere love—all the more deep, all the more intense, all the more overpowering, because he had not felt it at that earlier period, while the animal triumphs over the mental in almost all the affections of man. His heart and his spirit had lost nothing of their freshness to counterbalance the vigour and the power they had obtained, and at the age of seven or eight-and-twenty, he loved with all the vehemence and ardour of a boy, while he felt with all the permanence and energy of manhood.

Though contrary, perhaps, to the rules and etiquettes of French life at that period, he took advantage both of the message with which he was charged from the king and the sort of independence which Clémence de Marly had established for herself, to ask for her instead of either the duke or the duchess. He was not, indeed, without a hope that he should find her alone, and that hope was realized. She had expected him, and expected him early; and perhaps the good Duchess de Rouvré herself had fancied that such might be the case, and, remembering the warm affections of her own days, had abstained from presenting herself in the little sa-

loon where Clémence de Marly had usually established her abode during their residence in Paris.

Had Albert of Morseiul entertained one doubt of the affection of Clémence de Marly, that doubt must have vanished in a moment; must have vanished at the look with which she rose to meet him. It was all brightness, it was all happiness. The blood mounted, it is true, into her cheeks and into her temples; her beautiful lips trembled slightly, and her breath came fast; but the bright and radiant smile was not to be mistaken. The sparkling of the eyes spoke what words could not speak; and though her tongue for a moment refused its office, the smile that played around the lips was eloquent of all that the heart felt.

Not contented with the hand she gave, Albert of Morseiul took the other also; and not contented with the thrilling touch of those small hands, he threw his arms around her and pressed her to his heart; and not contented—for love is the greatest of encroachers—with that dear embrace, he made his lips tell the tale of their own joy to hers, and once and again he tasted the happiness that none had ever tasted before: and then, as if asking pardon for the rashness of his love, he pressed another kiss upon her fair hand, and, leading her back to her seat, took his place beside her.

Fearful that he should forget, he almost immediately gave her the jewels that the king had sent. But what were jewels to Clémence de Marly at that moment? He told her, also, the message the king had given, especially that part which noted her absence from the room where the lottery had been drawn.

"I would not have given those ten minutes," she replied, eagerly, "for all the jewels in his crown."

They then forgot the king, the court, and everything but each other, and spent the moments of the next half hour in the joy, in the surpassing joy, of telling and feeling the happiness that each conferred upon the other.

Oh! those bright sunny hours of early love, of love in its purity, and its truth, and its sincerity—of love stripped of all that is evil, or low, or corrupt, and retaining but of earth sufficient to make it harmonize with earthly creatures like ourselves; full of affection, full of eager fire, but affection as unselfish as human nature will admit, and fire derived from heaven itself! How shall ye ever be replaced in after life? What tone shall

ever supply the sound of that master chord after its vibrations have once ceased!

As the time wore on, however, and Albert of Morseiul remembered that there were many things on which it was necessary to speak at once to Clémence de Marly, the slight cloud of care came back upon his brow, and reading the sign of thought in a moment, she herself led the way by saying,

"But we must not forget, dear Albert, there is much to be thought of. We are spending our time in dreaming over our love, when we have to think of many more painful points in our situation. We have spoken of all that concerns our intercourse with each other, but of your situation at the court I am ignorant; and am not only ignorant of the cause, but astonished to find that, when I expected the most disastrous results, you are in high favour with the king, and apparently have all at your command."

"Not so, dear Clémence; alas! it is not so," replied the count; "the prosperity of my situation is as hollow as a courtier's heart; as fickle as any of the other smiles of fortune."

Before he could go on, however, to explain to her the real position in which he stood, Madame de Rouvré entered the room, and was delighted at seeing one whom she had always esteemed and loved. She might have remained long; but Clémence, with the manner which she was so much accustomed to assume, half playful, half peremptory, took up the little case of earrings from the table, saying, "See what the king has sent me! and now, dear duchess, you shall go away, and leave me to talk with my lover. It is so new a thing for me to have an acknowledged lover, and one, too, that I don't despise, that I have not half tired myself with my new plaything. Am not I a very saucy demoiselle?" she added, kissing the duchess, who was retiring with laughing obedience. "But take the diamonds, and examine them at your leisure. They will serve to amuse you in the absence of your Clémence."

"If I were a lover now," said the duchess, smiling, "I should say something about their not being half as bright as your eyes, Clémence. But words vary in their value so much, that what would be very smart and pleasant from a young man, is altogether worthless on the lips of an old woman. Let me see you before you

go, count. It is not fair that saucy girl should carry you off altogether."

"Now, now, Albert," said Clémence, as soon as the duchess was gone, "tell me, before we are interrupted again."

The count took up the tale, then, with his last day's sojourn in Brittany, and went on to detail minutely everything that had occurred since his arrival in the capital; and, as he told her, her cheek grew somewhat paler, till, in the end, she exclaimed, "It is all as bad as it can be. You will never change your faith, Albert."

"Could you love me, Clémence," he asked, "if I did?"

She put her hand before her eyes for a moment, then placed one of them in his, and replied, "I should love you ever, Albert, with a woman's love, unchangeable and fixed. But I could not esteem you as I would fain esteem him that I must love."

"So thought I," replied the count, "so judged I of my Clémence; and all that now remains to be thought of is, how is this to end, and what is to be our conduct to make the end as happy to ourselves as may be?"

"Alas!" replied Clémence, "I can answer neither question. The probability is, that all must end badly; that your determination not to yield your religion to any inducements must soon be known; for, depend upon it, Albert, they will press you on the subject more closely every day; and you are not made to conceal what you feel. The greater the expectations of your conversion have been, the more terrible will be the anger that your adherence to your own faith will produce; and, depend upon it, the Prince de Marsillac takes a wrong view of the question; for it matters not whether this affair have passed away or be revived against you, power never yet wanted a pretext to draw the sword of persecution. Neither, Albert, can my change of faith be long concealed. I cannot insult God by the mockery of faith in things, regarding which my mind was long doubtful, but which I am now well assured, and thoroughly convinced, are false. In this you are in a better situation than myself, for you can but be accused of holding fast to the faith that you have ever professed: me they will accuse of falling into heresy with my eyes open. Perhaps they will add that I have done so for your love."

"Then, dear Clémence," he replied, "the only path for us is the path of flight, speedy and rapid flight. I have already secured for us competence in another land; wealth I cannot secure, but competence is surely all that either you or I require."

"All, all," replied Clémence; "poverty with you, Albert, would be enough. But the time and the manner of our flight must be left to you. The distance between Paris and the frontier is so small, that we had better effect it now, and not wait for any contingency. If you can find means to withdraw yourself from the court, I will find means to join you anywhere within two or three miles' journey of the capital. But write to me the place, the hour, and the time; and, as we love each other, Albert, and by the faith that we both hold, and for which we are both prepared to sacrifice so much, I will not fail you."

"What if it should be to-morrow?" demanded the count.

Clémence gazed at him for a moment with some agitation. "Even if it should be to-morrow," she said at length, "even if it should be to-morrow, I will come. But oh, Albert," she added, leaning her head upon his shoulder, "I am weaker, more cowardly, more womanly than I thought. I would fain have it a day later: I would fain procrastinate even by a day. But never mind, never mind, Albert; should it be necessary, should you judge it right, should you think it requisite for your safety, let it be to-morrow."

"I cannot yet judge," replied the count; "I think, I trust that it will not be so soon. I only put the question to make you aware that such a thing is possible, barely possible. In all probability the king will give me longer time. He cannot suppose that the work of conversion will take place by a miracle. I do not wish to play a double game with them, even in the least, Clémence, nor suffer them to believe that there is a chance even of my changing when there is none; but still I would fain, for your sake as well as mine, delay a day or two."

"Delays are dangerous, even to an old proverb," said Clémence; but, ere she could conclude her sentence, the Duc de Rouvré entered the room; and not choosing, or perhaps not having spirits at the moment to act towards him as she had done towards the duchess, Clé-

mence suffered the conversation to drop, and proceeded with him and her lover to the saloon of madame.

In that saloon there appeared a number of persons, among whom were several that the Count de Morseiul knew slightly; but the beams of royal favour having fallen upon him with their full light during the night before, all those who had any knowledge of him were of course eager to improve such an acquaintance, and vied with each other in smiles and looks of pleasure on his appearance. Among others was the Chevalier de Rohan, whom we have noticed as forming one of the train of suiters who had followed Clémence de Marly to Poitiers; but he was now satisfied, apparently, that not even any fortunate accident could give the bright prize to him, and he merely bowed to her on her entrance with the air of a worshipper at the shrine of an idol, while he grasped the hand of his successful rival, and declared himself delighted to see him.

After remaining there for some time longer, lingering in the sunshine of the looks of her he loved, the count prepared to take his departure, especially as several other persons had been added to the circle, and their society fell as a weight and an encumbrance upon him when his whole thoughts were of Clémence de Marly. He had taken his leave and reached the door of the apartment, when, starting up with the earrings in her hand, she exclaimed,

"Stay, stay, Monsieur de Morseiul, I forgot to send my thanks to the king. Pray tell him," she added, advancing across the room to speak with the count in a lower tone, "Pray tell him how grateful I am to his majesty for his kind remembrance; and remember," she said, in a voice that could be heard by no one but himself, "to-morrow, should it be needful: I am firmer now."

Albert of Morseiul dared not speak all that he felt with the language of the lips; but the eyes of her lover thanked Clémence de Marly sufficiently; and he, on his part, left her with feelings which the bustle and the crowd of the thronged capital struggled with and oppressed.

He rode quick, then, in order to make his way out of the city as fast as possible; but, ere he had passed the gate, he was overtaken by the Chevalier de Rohan, who came up to his side, saying, "I am delighted to have

overtaken you, my dear count. Such a companion on this long, dry, tiresome journey to Versailles is indeed a delight; and I wished also particularly to speak to you regarding a scheme of mine, which, I trust, may bring me better days."

Now the society of the Chevalier de Rohan, though his family was one of the highest in France, and though he held an important place at the court, was neither very agreeable nor very reputable; and the count, therefore, replied briefly, "I fear that, as I shall stop at several places, it will not be in my power to accompany you, Monsieur le Chevalier; but anything I can do to serve you will give me pleasure."

"Why, the fact is," replied the chevalier, "that I was very unfortunate last night at play, and wished to ask if you would lend me a small sum till I receive my appointments from the king. If you are kind enough to do so, I doubt not, before two days are over, to recover all that I have lost, and ten times more, for I discovered the fortunate number last night when it was too late."

A faint and melancholy smile came over the count's face at the picture of human weakness that his companion's words displayed; and as the chevalier was somewhat celebrated for borrowing without repaying, he asked what was the sum he required.

"Oh, a hundred Louis will be quite enough," replied the chevalier, not encouraged to ask more by his companion's tone.

"Well, Monsieur de Rohan," said the count, "I have not the sum with me, but I will send it to you on my arrival at Versailles, if that will be time enough."

"Quite! quite!" replied De Rohan; "any time before the tables are open."

"Indeed, indeed! my good friend," said the count, "I wish you would abandon such fatal habits; and, satisfied with having lost so much, live upon the income you have, without ruining yourself by trying to make it greater. However, I will send the money, and do with it what you will."

"You are a prude! you are a prude!" cried De Rohan, putting spurs to his horse; "but I will tell you something more in your own way when we meet again."

CHAPTER IV.

THE UNKNOWN PERIL.

Dark and ominous as was the prospect of everything around the Count de Morseiul, when the blessings of his bright days were passing away one by one, and his best hope was exile, yet the interview which had just taken place between him and Clémence de Marly was like a bright summer hour in the midst of storms, and, even when it was over, like the June sun, it left a long twilight of remembered joy behind it. But there are times in human life when dangers are manifold, when we are pressed upon by a thousand difficulties, and when, nevertheless, though the course we have determined on is full of risks and perils, sorrows and sufferings, we eagerly, perhaps even imprudently, hurry forward upon it, to avoid those very doubts and uncertainties, which are worse than actual pains.

Such was the case with the Count de Morseiul, and he felt within him so strong an inclination to take the irrevocable step of quitting France for ever, and seeking peace and toleration in another land, that, much accustomed to examine and govern his own feelings, he paused and pondered over the line of conduct he was about to pursue during his visit to the Bishop of Meaux, perceiving in himself a half-concealed purpose of forcing on the conversation to the subject of religion, and of showing Bossuet clearly that there was no chance whatever of inducing him to abandon the religion of his fathers. Against this inclination, on reflection, he determined to be upon his guard, although he adhered rigidly to his resolution of countenancing, in no degree, a hope of his becoming a convert to the Roman Catholic faith; and his only doubt now was whether his passing two evenings so close together with the Bishop of Meaux, with whom he had so slight an acquaintance, might not afford some encouragement to expectations which he felt himself bound to check.

Having promised, however, he went; but, at the same time, made up his mind not to return to the prelate's

abode speedily. On the present occasion he not only found Bossuet alone, but was left with him for more than an hour, without any other visiter appearing. The good bishop himself was well aware of the danger of scaring away those whom he sought to win; and sincerely desirous, for the count's own sake, of bringing him into that which he believed to be the only path to salvation, he was inclined to proceed calmly and gently in the work of his conversion.

There were others, however, more eager than himself; the king was as impetuous in the apostolic zeal which he believed himself to feel, as he had formerly been in pursuits which, though certainly more gross and sensual, would perhaps, if accurately weighed, have been found to be as little selfish, vain, and personal, as the efforts that he made to convert his Protestant subjects. The hesitation even in regard to embracing the *king's creed* was an offence, and he urged on Bossuet eagerly to press the young count, so far, at least, as to ascertain if there were or were not a prospect of his speedily following the example of Turenne and so many others. The bishop was thus driven to the subject, though against his will; and, shortly after the young count's appearance, he took him kindly and mildly by the hand, and led him into a small cabinet where were ranged, in goodly order, a considerable number of works on the controversial divinity of the time. Among others, appeared some of the good prelate's own productions, such as "L'Exposition de la Doctrine Catholique," the "Traité de la Communion sous les deux Espèces," and the "Histoire des Variations." Bossuet ran his finger over the titles as he pointed them out to the young count.

"I wish, my young friend," he said, "that I could prevail upon you to read some of these works: some perhaps even of my own, not from the vanity of an author alone, though I believe that the greatest compliment that has ever been paid to me was that which was paid by some of the pastors of your own sect, who asserted when I wrote that book," and he pointed to the Exposition, "that I had altered the Catholic doctrines in order to suit them to the purposes of my defence. Nor indeed would they admit the contrary, till the full approbation of the head of our church stamped the work as containing the true doctrines of our holy faith. But, as I was

saying, I wish I could persuade you to read some of these, not so much to gratify the vanity of an author, nor even simply to make a convert, but because I look upon you as one well worthy of saving as a brand from the burning; and because I should look upon your recall to the bosom of the mother church as worth a hundred of any ordinary conversions. In short, my dear young friend, because I would save you from much unhappiness in life, in death, and in eternity."

"I owe you deep thanks, Monsieur de Meaux," said the count, "for the interest that you take in me; and I will promise you most sincerely to read, with as unprejudiced an eye as possible, not only any, but all of the works you have written on such subjects. I have already read some, and it is by no means too much to admit, that if any one could induce me to quit the faith in which I have been brought up, it would be Monsieur de Meaux. He will not think me wrong, however, when I say that I am, as yet, unconvinced. Nor will he be offended if I make one observation, or, rather, ask one question, in regard to something he has just said."

"Far, far from it, my son," replied the bishop. "I am ever willing to explain anything, to enter into the most open and candid exposition of everything that I think or feel. I have no design to embarrass, or to perplex, or to obscure; my whole view is to make my own doctrine clear and explicit, so that the mind of the merest child may choose between the right and the wrong."

"I merely wish to ask," said the count, "whether by the words 'unhappiness in life and in death,' you meant to allude to temporal or spiritual unhappiness? whether you meant delicately to point out to me that the hand of persecution is likely to be stretched out to oppress me? or—"

"No! no!" cried Bossuet, eagerly. "Heaven forbid that I should hold out as an inducement the apprehension of things that I disapprove of! No, Monsieur de Morseiul, I meant merely spiritual happiness and unhappiness, for I do not believe that any man can be perfectly happy in life while persisting in a wrong belief; certainly I believe that he must be unhappy in his death; and, alas! my son, reason and religion both teach me that he must be unhappy in eternity."

"The great question of eternity," replied the count, solemnly, "is in the hands of God. But the man, and the only man, who, in this sense, must be unhappy in life, in death, and in eternity, seems to me to be the man who is uncertain in his faith. In life and in death I can conceive the deist, or (if there be such a thing) the atheist—if perfectly convinced of the truth of his system—perfectly happy and perfectly contented. But the skeptic can never be happy. He who, in regard to religious belief, is doubtful, uncertain, wavering, must assuredly be unhappy in life and in death, though to God's great mercy we must refer the eternity. If I remain unshaken, Monsieur de Meaux, in my firm belief that what we call the reformed church is right in its views and doctrines, the only thing that can disturb or make me unhappy therein is temporal persecution. Were my faith in that church, however, shaken, I would abandon it immediately. I could not, I would not remain in a state of doubt."

"The more anxious am I, my son," replied the bishop, "to withdraw you from that erroneous creed, for so firm and so decided a mind as yours is the very one which could the best appreciate the doctrines of the church of Rome, which are always clear, definite, and precise, the same to-day as they were yesterday, based upon decisions that never change, and not, as your faith does, admitting doubts and fostering variations. You must listen to me, my young friend. Indeed, I must have you listen to me. I hear some of our other friends in the next room; but we must converse more, and the sooner the better. You have visited me twice, but I will next visit you, for I think nothing should be left undone that may court a noble spirit back to the church of God."

Thus saying, he slowly led the way into the larger room, the young count merely replying as he did so,

"Would to God, Monsieur de Meaux, that by your example and by your exhortations you could prevent others from giving us Protestants the strongest of all temporal motives to remain attached to our own creed."

"What motive is that?" demanded Bossuet, apparently in some surprise.

"Persecution!" replied the count; "for, depend upon it, to all those who are worthy of being gained, persecution is the strongest motive of resistance."

"Alas! my son," replied Bossuet, "that you should acknowledge such a thing as pride to have anything on earth to do with the eternal salvation of your souls. An old friend of mine used to say, 'It is more often from pride than from want of judgment that people set themselves up against established opinions. Men find the first places occupied in the right party, and they do not choose to take up with back seats.' I have always known this to be true in the things of the world; but I think that pride should have nothing to do with the things of eternity."

Thus ended the conversation between the count and Bossuet on the subject of religion for that night. Two guests had arrived, more soon followed, and the conversation became more general. Still, however, as there were many ecclesiastics, the subject of religion was more than once introduced, the restraint which the presence of a Protestant nobleman had occasioned on the first visit of the count having now been removed. The evening passed over calmly and tranquilly, however, till about ten o'clock at night, when the count took his leave and departed. The rest of the guests stayed later; and, on issuing out into the street, the young nobleman found himself alone in a clear, calm moonlight night, with the irregular shadows of the long line of houses checkering the pavement with the yellow lustre of the moon.

Looking up into the wide open square beyond, the shadows were lost, and there the bright planet of the night seemed to pour forth a flood of radiance without let or obstruction. There was a fountain in the middle of the square, casting up its sparkling waters towards the sky as if spirits were tossing about the moonbeams in their sport, and casting the bright rays from hand to hand. As the count gazed, however, and thought that he would stroll on, giving himself up to calm reflection at that tranquil hour, and arranging his plans for the momentous future without disturbance from the hum of idle multitudes, a figure suddenly came between the fountain and his eyes, and crept slowly down on the dark side of the street towards him. He was standing at the moment in the shadow of Bossuet's porch, so as not to be seen: but the figure came down the street to the door of the count's own dwelling, paused for a minute as if in doubt, then walked over into the moonlight,

and gazed up into the windows of the prelate's hotel. The count instantly recognised the peculiar form and structure of his valet, Jerome Riquet, and, walking out from the porch towards his own house, he called the man to him, and asked him if anything were the matter.

"Why, yes, sir," said Riquet, in a low voice, "so much so that I thought of doing what I never did in my life before—sending in for you to know what to do. There has been a person seeking you twice or three times since you went, and saying he must speak with you immediately."

"Do you know him?" demanded the count.

"Oh yes, I know him," answered Riquet; "a determined devil he is too; a man in whom you used to place much confidence in the army, and who was born, I believe, upon your own lands—Armand Herval, you know him well. I could give him another name if I liked."

"Well," said the count, as tranquilly as possible; "what of him, Riquet? What does he want here?"

"Ay, sir, that I can't tell," replied the man; "but I greatly suspect he wants no good. He is dressed in black from his head to his feet; and his face is black enough too, that is to say, the look of it. It was always like a thunder-cloud, and now it is like a thunder-cloud gone mad. I don't think the man is sane, sir; and the third time he came down here, about ten minutes ago, he said he could not stop a minute; that he had business directly; and so he went away, pulling his great dark hat and feather over his head, as if to prevent people from seeing how his eyes were flashing; and then I saw that the breast of his great heavy coat was full of something else than rosemary or honeycomb."

"What do you mean? what do you mean?" demanded the count. "What had he in his breast?"

"Why, I mean pistols, sir," said the man; "if I must speak good French, I say he had pistols, then. So, thinking he was about some mischief, I crept after him from door to door, dodged him across the square, and saw him go in by a gate, that I thought was shut, into the garden behind the chateau. I went in after him, though I was in a desperate fright for fear any one should catch me; and I trembled so that I shook three crowns in my pocket till they rang like sheep-bells. I thought he would have heard me; but I watched him plant himself under one of the statues on the terrace,

and there he stood like a statue himself. I defy you to have told the one from the other, or to have known Monsieur Herval from Monsieur Neptune. Whenever I saw that, I came back to look for you, and tell you what had happened; for you know, sir, I am awfully afraid of firearms; and I had not even a pair of curling-irons to fight him with."

"That must be near the apartments of Louvois," said the young count, thoughtfully. "This man may very likely seek to do him some injury."

"More likely the king, sir," said the valet, in a low voice. "I have heard that his majesty walks there on that terrace every fine night after the play for half an hour. He is quite alone, and it would be as much as one's liberty is worth to approach him at that time."

"Come with me directly, Riquet," said the count, "and show me where this is. Station yourself at the gate you mention after I have gone in, and, if you hear me call to you aloud, instantly give the alarm to the sentries. Come, quick, for the play must soon be over."

Thus saying, the young count strode on, crossed the place, and, under the guidance of Riquet, approached the gate through which Herval had entered. The key was in the lock on the outside, and the door ajar; and, leaving the man in the shadow, the count entered alone. The gardens appeared perfectly solitary, sleeping in the moonlight. The principal waterworks were still; and no sound or motion was to be heard but such as proceeded from the smaller fountains that were sparkling on the terrace, making the night musical with the plaintive murmur of their waters, or from the tops of the high trees as they were waved by the gentle wind. The palace was full of lights, and nothing was seen moving across any of the windows, so that it was evident that the play was not yet concluded; and the young count looked about for the person he sought for a moment or two in vain.

At length, however, he saw the shadow cast by one of the groups of statues alter itself somewhat in form; and, instantly crossing the terrace to the spot, he saw Herval sitting on the first step which led from the terrace down to the gardens, his back leaning against the pedestal, and his arms crossed upon his chest. He did not hear the step of the young count till he was close upon him; but the moment he did so, he started up, and

drew a pistol from his breast. He soon perceived who it was, however; and the count, saying in a low voice, "My servant tells me you have been seeking me," drew him, though somewhat unwilling apparently, down the steps.

"What is it you wanted with me?" continued the count, gazing in his face to see whether the marks of insanity which Riquet had spoken of were visible to him. But there was nothing more in the man's countenance than its ordinary fierce and fiery expression when stimulated by high excitement.

"I came to you, count," he said, "to make you, if you will, the sharer of a glorious deed; and, now you are here, you shall at least be the spectator thereof—the death of your great enemy—the death of him who tramples upon his fellow-creatures as upon grapes in the winepress—the death of the slayer of souls and bodies."

"Do you mean Louvois?" said the count, in a calm tone.

"Louvois!" scoffed the man. "No! no! no! I mean him who gives fangs to the viper and poison to the snake! I mean him without whom Louvois is but a bundle of dry reeds to be consumed to light the first fire that wants kindling, or to rot in its own emptiness! I mean the giver of the power, the lord of the persecutions: the harlot-monger and the murderer that calls himself King of France; and who, from that holy title, which he claims from God, thinks himself entitled to pile vice upon folly, and sin upon vice, and crime upon sin, till the destruction which he has so often courted to his own head shall this night fall upon him. The first of the brutal murderers that he sent down to rob our happy hearths of the jewel of their peace, this hand has slain; and the same that crushed the worm shall crush the serpent also."

The count now saw that there was, indeed, in the state of Herval's mind, something different from its usual tone and character. It could hardly be said that the chief stay thereof was broken, so as to justify the absolute supposition of insanity; but it seemed as if one of the fine filaments of the mental texture had given way, leaving all the rest nearly as it was before, though with a confused and morbid line running through the whole web. It need not be said that Albert of Morseiul

was determined to prevent at all or any risk the act that the man proposed to commit; but yet he wished to do so without calling down death and torture on the head of one who was kindled almost into absolute madness by wrongs which touched the finest affections of his heart, through religion and through love.

"Herval," he said, calmly, "I am deeply grieved for you. You have suffered, I know how dreadfully; and you have suffered among the first of our persecuted sect: but still you must let me argue with you, for you act regarding all this matter in a wrong light, and you propose to commit a great and terrible crime."

"Argue with me not, Count of Morseiul!" cried the man; "argue with me not, for I will hear no arguments. Doubtless you would have argued with me, too, about killing that small pitiful insect, that blind worm, who murdered her I loved, and three or four noble and brave men along with her."

"I will tell you in a word, Herval," replied the count; "had you not slain him, I would have done so. My hand against his, alone, and my life against his. He had committed a base, foul, ungenerous murder, for which I knew that the corrupted law would give us no redress, and I was prepared to shelter, under a custom which I abhor and detest in general, the execution of an act of justice which could be obtained by no other means. Had it been but for that poor girl's sake, I would have slain him like a dog."

"Thank you, count, thank you," cried the man, grasping his hand in his with the vehemence of actual phrensy. "Thank you for those words from my very soul. But he was not worthy of your noble sword. He died the death that he deserved; strangled like a common felon, writhing and screaming for the mercy he had never shown."

To what he said on that head the count did not reply; but he turned once more to the matter immediately before them.

"Now, Herval," he said, "you see that I judge not unkindly or hardly by you. You must listen to my advice, however—"

"Not about this, not about this," cried the man, vehemently; "I am desperate and I am determined. I will not see whole herds of my fellow-Christians slaughtered like swine to please the bloody butcher on the throne.

I will not see the weak and the faint-hearted driven by terror to condemn their own souls and barter eternity for an hour of doubtful peace. I will not see the ignorant and the ill-instructed bought by scores, like cattle at a market. I will not see the infants torn from their mothers' arms to be offered a living sacrifice to the Moloch of Rome. This night he shall die, who has condemned so many others; this night he shall fall, who would work the fall of the pure church that condemns him. I will hear no advice: I will work the work for which I came, and then perish when I may. Was it not for this that every chance has favoured me? Was it not for this that the key was accidentally left in the door till such time as I laid my hand upon it and took it away? Was it not for this that no eye saw me seize upon that key this morning, though thousands were passing by? Was it not for this that such a thing should happen on the very night in which he comes forth to walk upon that terrace? And shall I now pause, shall I now listen to any man's advice who tells me that I must hold my hand?"

"If you will not listen to my advice," said the count, "you must listen to my authority, Herval. The act you propose to commit you shall not commit."

"No!" cried he. "Who shall stop me? Yours is but one life against mine, remember; and I care not how many fall, or how soon I fall myself either, so that this be accomplished."

"My life, as you say," replied the count, "is but one. But even, Herval, if you were to take mine, which would neither be just nor grateful; if even you were to lose your own, which may yet be of great service to the cause of our faith, you could not and you should not take that of the king. If you are determined, I am determined too. My servant stands at yonder gate, and on the slightest noise he gives the alarm. Thus, then, I tell you," he continued, glancing his eyes towards the windows of the palace, across which various figures were now beginning to move, "thus, then, I tell you, you must either instantly quit this place with me, or that struggle begins between us which, end how it may as far as I am concerned, must instantly ensure the safety of the king, and lead you to trial and execution. The way is still open for you to abandon this rash project at once, or to call down ruin upon your own head with-

out the slightest possible chance of accomplishing your object."

"You have frustrated me," cried the man, "you have foiled me! You have overthrown, by preventing a great and noble deed, the execution of a mighty scheme for the deliverance of this land and the security of our suffering church! The consequences be upon your own head, Count of Morseiul! the consequences be upon your own head! I see that you have taken your measures too well, and that, even if you paid the penalty for such interference, the result could not be accomplished."

"Come, then," said the count; "come, Herval, I must forgive anger as I have thwarted a rash purpose; but make what speed you may to quit the gardens, for, ere another minute be over, many a one will be crossing that terrace to their own apartments."

Thus saying, he laid his hand upon the man's arm, to lead him gently away from the dangerous spot on which he stood. But Herval shook off his grasp sullenly, and walked on before with a slow and hesitating step, as if, every moment, he would have turned in order to effect his purpose. The count doubted and feared that he would do so; and glad was he, indeed, when he saw him pass the gate which led out of the gardens. As soon as Herval had gone forth, the young count closed the door, locked it, and threw the key over the wall, saying, "There! thank God, it is now impossible!"

"Ay," replied the man. "But there are other things possible, count; and things that may cause more bloodshed and more confusion than one little pistol-shot. It would have saved all France," he continued, muttering to himself, "it would have saved all France. What a change! But, if we must fight it out in the field, we must."

While he spoke he walked onward towards the count's house, in a sort of gloomy but not altogether silent revery; in the intervals of which, he spoke or murmured to himself in a manner which almost seemed to justify the opinion expressed by Riquet, that he was insane. Suddenly turning round towards the valet who followed, however, he demanded sharply, "Has there not been a tall man, with a green feather in his hat, asking for your lord two or three times to-day?"

"So I have heard," replied Riquet, "from the Swiss, but I did not see him myself."

"The Swiss never informed me thereof," said the count. "Pray who might he be, and what was his business?"

"His name, sir," replied Herval, "is Hatréaumont, and his business was for your private ear."

"Hatréaumont!" said the count, in return. "What, he who was an officer in the Guards?"

Herval nodded his head, and the count went on: "A brave man, a determined man he was; but, in other respects, a wild, rash profligate. He can have no business for my private ear that I should be glad or even willing to hear."

"You know not that, count," said Herval; "he has glorious schemes in view; schemes which perhaps may save his country."

The count shook his head; "Schemes," he said, "which will bring ruin on himself and on all connected with him. I have rarely known or heard of a man, unprincipled and profligate in private life, who could be faithful and just in public affairs. Such men there may be, perhaps; but the first face of the case is against them; for surely they who are not to be trusted between man and man, are still less to be trusted when greater temptations lie in their way, and greater interests are at stake."

"Well, well," said Herval, "he will not trouble you again. This was the last day of his stay in Paris, and, ere to-morrow be two hours old, he will be far away."

"And pray," demanded the count, "was it by his advice—he who owes nothing but gratitude to the king—was it by his advice that you were stationed where I found you?"

"He knew nothing of it," said the man, sharply; "he knew nothing of it; nor did I intend that he should know till it was all over; and now," he continued, "what is to become of me?"

"Why, in the first place," replied the count, "you had better come in with me and take some refreshment. While we are doing so, we will think of the future for you."

The man made no reply, but followed the count, who led the way into his house; and then ordered some refreshments of various kinds to be set before his guest from Poitou, examining the man's countenance as he did so, and becoming more and more convinced that

something certainly had given way in the brain to produce the wandering and unsettled eye which glared in his face, as well as the rash words and actions that he spoke and performed.

"And now, Herval," he said, as soon as they were alone, "there is but one question which you should ask yourself—whether it is better for you to return at once to Poitou, or, since you are so far on your way to Holland, to take advantage of that circumstance, and speed to the frontier without delay. I know not what is the situation of your finances; but, if money be wanting for either step, I am ready to supply you as an old comrade."

"I want no money," exclaimed the man; "I am wealthy in my station beyond yourself. What have I to do with money whose life is not worth an hour? I have a great mind to divide all I have into a hundred portions, spend one each day, and die at the end of it. Holland! no, no; this is no time for me to quit France. I will be at my post at the coming moment; I will set off again to-night for Poitou. But let me tell you, count—for I had forgotten—if you should yourself wish to secure aught in Holland—and I have heard that there is a lady dearer to you than all your broad lands—remember there is a schoolmaster living three doors on this side of the barrier of Passy, called Vandenenden, passing for a Fleming by birth, but in reality a native of Dort. He has regular communication with his native land, and will pass anything you please with the utmost security."

"I thank you for that information sincerely," replied the count; "it may be most useful to me. But give me one piece of information more," he added, as the man rose after having drank a glass of water, with a few drops of wine in it. "What was the state of the province when you left it?"

"If you mean, count, what was the state of the reformed party," said Herval, gazing round with a look of wild carelessness, "it was a girl in a consumption, where something is lost every day, no one knows how, and yet the whole looks as pretty as ever, till there is nothing but a skeleton remains. But there will be this difference, count, there will be this difference. There will be strength found in the skeleton! Have you not heard? There were three thousand men, together with women

and children, all converted at once, within ten miles of Niort; and it cost the priest so much bread and wine giving them the sacrament, that he swore he would make no more converts unless the king would double the value of the cure—ha! ha! ha!" and, laughing loud and wildly, he turned upon his heel and left the room without bidding the count good-night.

CHAPTER V.

THE DECISION.

About seven o'clock on the following morning, Jerome Riquet entered his master's room on tiptoe, drew the curtains of his bed, and found him leaning on his arm, reading attentively. The subject of the count's studies matters not. They were interrupted immediately; for a note, which the valet placed in his hands, caused him instantly to spring up to order his horses to be prepared with speed, and to set off for Paris at once, without waiting for the morning meal. The note which caused this sudden expedition contained but a few words. They were,

"Come to me immediately, if you can, for I have matter of deep moment on which I wish to speak with you. You must not come, however, to the Hôtel de Rouvré; for, though it may seem strange in me to name another place to meet you, yet you will find with me one whom you will be surprised to see. I must not, then, hesitate to ask you to seek me towards ten o'clock, at number five in the street of the Jacobins; the house is that of a bookbinder, and in the shop you will find Maria."

It had no signature, but the handwriting was that of Clémence. All that had occurred within the last few days had shown the Count de Morseiul that the crisis of his fate was approaching; that a very few days, nay, a very few hours, might decide the fortunes of his future life for ever. The multitude of matters which had pressed for his consideration during the two or three preceding days, the various anxieties that he had suffer-

ed, the mingling of joy and hope with pain and apprehension, had all created a state of mind in which it was difficult to think calmly of the future. Now, however, he had regained complete mastery of his own mind; the short interval of repose which had taken place had removed all confusion, all agitation, from his thoughts; and as he rode on towards Paris somewhat slowly, finding that there was more than the necessary time to accomplish his journey, he revolved coolly and deliberately in his own mind the peculiar points in his situation, and questioned himself as to his conduct and his duty in regard to each.

First, then, of course, came the image of Clémence; and in regard to his love for her and hers for him, there was many a question to be asked, which was answered by his own heart, whether altogether fairly and candidly or not, those who know love and love's nature can best declare. In asking her to fly with him from France, then, he was going to take her from wealth, and splendour, and luxury, and soft nurture, and all the comforts and conveniences which, surrounding her from her earliest years, had made to her eyes poverty, and difficulty, and distress seem but a recorded dream, of which she knew nothing but that some men had felt such things.

He had to offer her in a foreign land, indeed, competence, mere competence; but would competence to her, educated as she had been educated, be anything else than another name for poverty? Even that competence itself might perhaps be insecure. It depended upon the doubtful faith of foreign merchants, from whom he had no security; and, if that were gone, he had naught to depend upon but his sword and a high name in arms. Could Clémence bear all this? he asked himself. Could the gay, the admired, the adored, endure seclusion and retirement, and almost solitude? Could the spoiled child of fortune undergo privation? Could she, who had been accustomed but to command to be obeyed, be contented with scanty service from foreign servants? Would she never repine? Would she never look back to the bright land of France, and think with regret of the high station from which she had voluntarily descended? Would she never even, by one repining thought in the depth of her heart, reproach him for having won her away to share his exile and misery? Would he never see upon her countenance one shade of sorrow and dissatisfac-

tion when petty cares weighed down the mind made for greater things; when small anxieties and daily discomforts interrupted the current of finer and higher thoughts; or when disrespect and coldness made the sad change felt to her, upon whose words the brightest and the best had hung?

His heart answered No; that none of these things would ever arise to make him feel that he should not have taken her from her high fortunes to share his reverses. What could not love do, he asked himself, to brighten the lowliest lot? The grand face of nature would be still before them inexhaustible as a store of enjoyment; the communion of two high minds, he felt, could never be wanting while they were united; if they retained competence, they had all that was needful; and if for a time worse fell upon them, love would surely be strong enough to excite them to every effort and every exertion, each for the other, to cheer, to encourage, to alleviate; and would bring, too, its own reward. Besides, he remembered that he should never have to reproach himself with having led Clémence to difficulty and to danger—a reproach which, could it have been brought against him by conscience, would have imbittered all his joys—for her own situation, her own faith, required flight as well as his; and by making her his own, he only secured to her protection, support, affection, and guidance.

Such were some of the thoughts which crossed his mind regarding Clémence; but there was another consideration of more difficulty, a question on which he was less satisfied. His fellow Protestants throughout the land, and more especially those who looked up to him for aid and for direction, should he now leave them to their fate, even though he could not avert from them one blow, even though he could not save them from one single pang? Should he not stay to share their lot, to comfort or to fall with them?

The question would have been answered at once had they been firm and united among themselves. It needed not, indeed, that they should have armed to resist the royal authority, against which they had no power to contend; it needed not that they should have attempted to build up the churches which had been thrown down, to replace the ministers who had been ejected, to petition for the restoration of rights which injustice

had snatched from them: it needed none of these things to have induced him, without hesitation, to stay and partake of all that might befall them, if they had displayed a resolution of remaining calmly, firmly, though peaceably, attached to their faith, addressing their prayers to God in private, if public worship was forbidden them, and opposing to the iniquitous proceedings of their enemies that tranquil, steady resistance of endurance, which seldom fails in ultimately repelling attack.

Had they so acted, the Count de Morseiul would have had no hesitation; but such was not the case. Even before the last severe measures which have been recorded in this book, the inconveniences attending their situation, the apprehension of worse, and the prospect of immediate gain, had caused annually the conversion of hundreds of the Protestant population of France to the Roman Catholic faith. Nothing like a spirit of union had reigned among them for years; and now that danger and persecution fell upon them, each day brought to the court tidings of thousands upon thousands having at once professed conversion. Each bishop, each intendant, sent daily lists of the numbers who had quitted the religion of their fathers to embrace that of the state; and in almost all quarters, those who had courage to sacrifice something for conscience' sake, were flying from the land or preparing for flight.

He, too, had to remember that he was himself placed in a situation more difficult and dangerous than the rest. The question was not whether he should remain adhering calmly to his own faith, and living in tranquillity, though under oppression, or should fly to a foreign land; but there was a choice of three acts before him; whether he should remain to trial and perpetual imprisonment, if not death; or, retiring to Poitou at once, raise the standand of hopeless revolt; or seek security in another country, leaving those to whom he could render no possible service.

The voice of reason certainly said, Fly! but yet it was painful to him to do so. Independent of all thoughts of what he left behind—the dwelling of his infancy, the tombs of his fathers, the bright land of his birth—independent of all this, there was the clinging to his own people, which few can feel deeply but those circumstanced as he was; which none indeed can feel now, when the last vestiges have been swept away of

a system which, though in no slight degree dangerous and evil, had nevertheless many an amiable and many an admirable point. He loved not to leave them, he loved not to leave any fellow-sufferer behind while he provided for his own safety; and though reason told him that on every motive he ought to fly, yet he felt that lingering inclination to remain which required the voices of others to conquer entirely.

Such were the principal questions which his mind had found to discuss during the last two days; but since the preceding night, a new subject for thought had arisen, a new question presented itself. It however was not so difficult of solution as the others. A dark attempt upon the king's life, which could hardly have failed of success, had been nearly executed; but that was not all. From Herval he had learned that schemes, which there was much reason to believe were dangerous to the whole state, were at that moment in agitation, if not upon the point of being accomplished. He loved not to be the denouncer of any man; and for Herval himself, he felt pity mingled with blame, which made him glad that the length of time that had elapsed had given him an opportunity of retiring once more to Poitou.

With regard to the proceedings of Hatréaumont, however, he had no scruple and no hesitation. It was right and necessary that the king should be made acquainted with the fact of dangerous designs being in agitation; and although he was well aware that the task of informing the monarch of the truth would be a difficult and delicate one, so as not to bring the strong and unscrupulous hand of power upon persons who might be innocent, and were only accused by the word of a man whom he sincerely believed to be partially insane, yet he resolved to undertake that task, trusting to the firmness and uprightness of his own character to ensure that the execution of it should be such as to avoid doing injury to any one who was not guilty.

Men under such circumstances in general err from an inaccuracy or deficiency of statement, proceeding from the confusion and uncertainty of a mind oppressed and agitated by the burden of important affairs, or difficult and intricate circumstances. The Count de Morseiul, however, saw his way clearly, and prepared to tell the king exactly the words which Herval had made use of;

but, at the same time, to inform him that he had much reason to believe that the man was insane, and that, therefore, but little reliance was to be placed upon his statement, except so far as the employing of precaution might be required.

The meditation over all these circumstances fully occupied the time till his arrival in Paris; and, dismounting at his own house, he took his way alone and on foot towards the Rue des Jacobins. The capital at that period had but little of the light and graceful architectural beauty which the citizens have since endeavoured to give it; but there was, instead, a gray, mysterious-looking grandeur about the vast piles of building of which it was composed, peculiar and entirely characteristic of the French metropolis. The great height of the houses; the smallness, in general, of the windows; their multitudes; their irregularities; the innumerable carriage entrances, leading into courtyards where cities and new worlds seemed to be opening on every side; the intricate alleys and passages that were seen branching here and there in unknown directions as the stranger took his way through the streets; everything, in short, impressed upon the mind, as a keen and sensible perception, that fact, which, though common to all great capitals, is generally unfelt, that we are walking in the midst of a world of human beings with whom we have scarcely one feeling in sympathy; of whose habits, character, pursuits, pleasures, and pains we are utterly ignorant; who are living, moving, acting, feeling, undergoing life's ordeal, smiling with rapture, writhing with anguish, melting with the bitter tears of sorrow and regret, inspired by hope, or palpitating with expectation around us on every side, without our having the slightest participation in any of their feelings, with scarcely a knowledge of their existence, and certainly none of their situation.

It was impossible to walk through the streets of Paris at that time—it was impossible even to walk through the older parts of the city when I myself remember it, without having that sensation strongly excited—without asking one's self, as one gazed up at the small windows of some of the many tenanted houses, and saw the half-drawn curtain shading out even the scanty portion of sun that found its way thither: Is there sickness or death within? Are there tears over the departing couch

of the beloved? Is their anguish over the bier of the gone? without asking one's self, as one gazed at some wide-open casement, courting the summer air, and perhaps with some light piece of drapery floating out into the street, Is that the abode of love and joy? Is happy heart there meeting happy heart? Are they smiling over the birth of the firstborn, or watching the glad progress of a young spirit kindred with their own? without asking one's self, as the eye rested upon some squalid doorway, foul with uncleaned ages, or some window, thick and obscure with the dust of years, some dim alley, or some dark and loathsome passage, Is vice, and plunder, and iniquity there? Is there the feverish joy of sin, mingled with remorse, and anguish, and apprehension? Is there the wasting and the gnawing effects of vice, sickness, and sorrow, worn limbs, corroded heart, nights of restless watchfulness, and days of ceaseless anguish? It was impossible to walk through that tall city, with its myriads living above myriads, house within house, and court within court, without asking one's self such questions, and without feeling that the whole intense and thrilling reality of the scene was rendered but more striking by the gay and careless multitude that tripped along, each seeming scarcely conscious that there was another being in the world but himself.

The Count de Morseiul was half an hour before his time; he walked somewhat slowly, and in picturing the feelings which a contemplative mind might experience in passing through Paris, we have pictured those which pressed for his attention, and crossed from time to time the current of his other thoughts. At length, however, he entered the Rue des Jacobins, and easily found the house to which he had been directed. It was a tall building of six stories, with a bookseller's shop upon the ground floor. Very different indeed, however, was it from a gay dwelling such as Paris now exhibits, with every new publication in blue and yellow flaming in the windows: but, through a small door, entrance was obtained into a long dark shop, where, on shelves and in cases, and on benches and on counters, were piled up manifold dusty volumes, whose state of tranquil slumber seemed to have been long undisturbed. A single pale apprentice, with an apron on and a brush in his hand, walked from one end of the shop to the other, or ex-

amined with slow inactivity the sheets of some unbound work, moving about his task with the same indifference to its speedy execution as if the years of Methuselah were bound up in his indentures.

The count looked at the shop well to ascertain that he was right, and then entered; but in the long dim vista of the counters and packages, the person he sought for was not to be seen; and, not having contemplated such an occurrence, he was somewhat embarrassed as to the person he should ask for. To have inquired whether a lady were waiting for him there or not might perhaps have been received as an insult by the master of the house, and yet he thought it would be imprudent to risk the name of Clémence de Marly when she herself might not have given it. He felt sure that, had she arrived, her attendant Maria would have been at the post where she had promised to place her; and, in order to occupy the time till she came, he determined to ask for some book, and then enter into desultory conversation with the lad in the shop after having bought it.

He had scarcely spoken, however, when, from behind a pile of solid literature, which obscured still farther the end of the shop, the servant Maria came forth and advanced towards him. The matter was then easily explained, and the youth seemed in no degree surprised at the appointment, but proceeded to tie up the book which the count had demanded, while Maria told him that her young lady had only just arrived, and was waiting for him up stairs. He followed her with a rapid step as she led the way, and at the third turning of a long, dim, narrow staircase, he found Clémence waiting at a door and listening as if for his arrival.

There was something in the meeting under such circumstances which did away all feelings of reserve, such as perhaps might otherwise have still affected them towards each other; and Clémence, feeling that she was all his—that their fate was united for ever, felt scarcely a blush rise into her cheek when he at once pressed her to his heart upon their meeting. She spoke not, however, but held up her finger, as if to enjoin silence, and then led him through a little anteroom into a room beyond.

There, seated at a table, with some books scattered upon it, appeared the good pastor of Auron, Claude de l'Estang. He was thinner, paler, more worn than when

first we endeavoured to depict him; but the light was not gone out in the clear bright eye, the same mild but intelligent smile hung upon the lip, the same high spirit was thrown upon the brow. He rose and grasped the young count's hands eagerly.

"Oh, my dear Albert," he said, "I am glad to see you! This sweet child," he added, after the first exclamation, "wrote to me all that was between you and her. She is dear to my heart as if she were my own; and is she not my own? Did I not bring her back to the faith of her dear mother? Did I not rescue her from the evils of a corrupt, perverted church? But of that we will speak not now, Albert. The moment I heard of it—the moment I heard that you were here, and had cast yourself, as it were, into the jaws of the lion, after the fatal night when that murderous youth, like Pilate, mingled our blood with our sacrifices—I resolved at once to make my way hither, at all and any risks, to speak to you, to exhort you, to tell you what I have decided in my own mind is the only plan for you to follow. I thought, indeed, when I set out—notwithstanding all that has occurred since you left Poitou; notwithstanding the scattering of the sheep, and the driving forth of the shepherd, and the falling off of many, and the wavering of all the rest—I thought that here I might learn tidings which might make a change in my opinion; but that, at all events, it was right for me to come, in order that I might consult with you and others, and take our last final determination together. But, since I have heard from this dear child the situation in which you are placed; since I have heard from a weak brother, who has outwardly abjured the faith which he fondly clings to in his heart, things that you yourselves do not know, my opinion has been confirmed to the fullest extent, and I have only to say to you, Albert, fly! Fly with her immediately; save her from persecution, and anguish, and care; confirm her in the only true faith, and in the renunciation of every superstitious vanity of the church of Rome! Strengthen her, support her, protect her! Lose no time, no, not a day; for, if you do, danger to both, and, perhaps, everlasting separation in this world, may be the consequence."

"I am most ready and most willing," replied the count. "It is absolutely necessary, indeed, that I should return to Versailles, but only for a few hours. After

that, I can return hither, and, without further delay, execute what I am fully convinced is the only plan for us to pursue."

"It is the only plan," said the clergyman. "Are you aware, Albert, that, in the short space of five days, one half of the Protestants of Poitou have bent the knee to Baal? Are you aware that the very men who, a week ago, clung to you for aid and protection, would now fly from you, either in shame at their own degeneracy, or because you are marked out for indignation by the powers that be? Yes, Albert, they would fly from you! There is a remnant, indeed, faithful and true unto the last; but to them I shall say, as I say to you, they must go forth to other lands, and shake off the dust from their feet as a testimony against this place. There is nothing left you, Albert, but flight, and that speedy and unhesitating. I have told you that I have heard much from a weak brother, whose renunciation of his faith weighs heavy upon him. He is in the confidence, it would seem, of those who rule; and he has informed me that it is the determination of the monarch and his council never to let you quit the court of France except as a follower of the popish church of Rome. Every temptation is to be held out to you to make you yield, every menace used to drive you on the way they want; and, should your resistance become strong and decided, the order for your arrest is already made out, and needs but one word to cause its execution. Fly, then, fly, Albert; and, even if not for your own sake, for hers."

"I am most willing, my good friend," replied the count. "I need no exhortation so to do. But is Clémence still willing to go with me?"

"Can you doubt it, Albert," she said, "with *his* approbation and advice?"

"Yet, dear Clémence," said the count, "I should be wrong were I not to tell you what may happen. The danger, the risk of our escape, the fatigues, and labours, and anxieties of the journey, the perils that await us at every step you have made up your mind to. But, Clémence, have you thought of the change from affluence to mere competence, from splendour and luxury to bare necessaries, even perhaps to poverty itself, for all I have on earth depends upon the good faith of those to whom I have transmitted it, and I might arrive and find nothing. Have you thought of all this? Have you thought

that it may last for years, that we may have to live, and die, and bring up our children in poverty—"

"Out upon it, Albert!" exclaimed the old man, angrily; "wouldst thou take the part of the prince of this world against her better angel? But she will not doubt, she will not waver: I know she will not. Sooner than be a hypocrite, sooner than abandon truth and embrace error, she would cast herself upon the world, were it ten thousand times as bad. Out upon it! she fears not; she will have her husband, and her faith, and her God to support her."

"I have not thought of all you suggest, Albert," replied Clémence, more mildly, but still somewhat reproachfully; "I have not thought of them, because it was unnecessary to think of them at all. Do you not love me, Albert? Do I not love you? Is not that love riches, and splendour, and luxury enough for us? But when, beside that all-sufficient love, we have the knowledge that we are doing our duty; that we are suffering for our conscience' sake; that we have left all to follow what we believe the dictates of the great Author of our faith, there will be a satisfaction, a pride, a glory, that even a woman's heart can feel. Fear not for me, Albert; I understand your scruples, and, though they require forgiveness, I forgive them. Let us be guided by his advice—I am sure that it is good—and I am willing, most willing, to risk all and everything under such circumstances and for such a cause."

"Well, then, so be it," said the count; "let us consider our decision as made. This very night, Clémence, I will return to Paris. This very night I will meet you here; but oh, my good friend," he continued, turning to the pastor, "you whom I love and venerate as a father, you will easily understand what I feel when I say that I could wish most anxiously that this dear girl, who is to accompany me through scenes of some peril, were united to me before we depart, not alone by the bonds of deep and true affection, not alone by the bonds of all the mutual promises and engagements which man and woman can plight towards each other, but by the sanction of that holy religion which first instituted such a union, and by the blessing of one of the ministers of Christ. I fear, however, it cannot be done."

"Nay, my son, it can," replied the clergyman. "Expelled from our temples, debarred from the performance

of all those ceremonial rites, which are but the shadows and types of higher things, the abandonment of such ceremonies as we cannot exercise, can in no degree, either in the sight of man or of God, as long as the side of law or justice is considered, affect the validity of such a contract, or do away, in the slightest degree, the solemn legality of a union complete in all the forms which we are enabled to give it. Even were it not so, I have power delegated to me by the synod of our church, without application to higher authorities, whose approbation, for many years, would have been difficult and embarrassing to obtain, to perform all the ceremonies of the church, upon due knowledge certified by me that they are not contrary, in the particular cases, to the law of God, or to those just ordinances of man to which we have ourselves subscribed. If you desire it, and if Clémence is willing, I will this very night, before you depart, give my blessing to your union, and doubt not that, with my certificate thereof, witnessed by proper witnesses, that union will be held good by the Protestant church throughout the world."

"Then I fear not," exclaimed the count. "What say you, dear Clémence? Can you resolve upon this also? Speak, dear girl," he added, as she paused in silence, covering her eyes with her hand. "Speak! oh speak!"

"What should I say, Albert?" she said. "Do you dream that I would refuse? Do you suppose that I would reject the only thing which was wanting to give me confidence, and strength, and hope through all the perils that we may have to undergo?"

Albert gazed on her with a look that thanked her to the full; and, after a brief moment given to happiness, he asked, "But who shall be the witnesses?"

"Maria must be one," said Clémence, "for she, of course, goes with us."

"One of my servants may be another," said the count. "But it is better to have several."

"The master of this house and his son," said Claude de l'Estang, "will make up a number more than sufficient; and all that remains, Albert, is for you to go and settle your affairs at Versailles, and return hither as soon as you may; though I wish, indeed, that it were possible for you not to go back to that place at all."

"Indeed it is quite necessary," replied the count; "not contemplating this meeting, I have left all the little store

of wealth which I brought with me from Poitou in my house at Versailles. It is impossible to send for it without causing instant suspicion, and it is absolutely necessary, not only for the expenses of the journey, but in order to secure some little sum for our subsistence for a year or two, in case we shall find that, either by misfortune or by fraud, the money which I transmitted to Holland is not forthcoming."

"It is, indeed, most necessary," said Claude de l'Estang. "I have heard that one of our poor ministers, who was banished some years ago from Languedoc, suffered most terribly in foreign lands before he could gain employment."

"But I can bring in my share," exclaimed Clémence, her eyes sparkling with gladness. "I have a number of jewels of different kinds; many purchased in other days with my own money; many given me by friends of my youth long years ago. They have cost, I know, in all, many thousand livres. These are my own, and I will take them with me. Those that I have received from the duke and duchess, and other Roman Catholic friends, I shall leave to be given back to them again."

"Do so, do so!" said the pastor. "There are some people, my dear child, who would wring a text from Scripture to bid you do the contrary, telling you to spoil the Egyptians; but I think that such injunctions as that must ever be applicable to particular cases alone, and the application must be made by God himself. I say, leave all that is not justly and absolutely your own; leave all that those who gave it would not give now, if they could see the use to which you are going to apply it. We shall rarely regret, my child, if ever, having been too just; we shall never cease to regret if we are once unjust."

The Count de Morseiul had remarked that, through the whole of this conversation, the pastor had never once mentioned himself or his own plans. It might, however, seem that he left it to be understood that he, too, was about to fly from the land; but the Count de Morseiul knew him well, and was aware that he was one of those who would resolutely and firmly place himself in the way of perils which he would teach others to avoid. He did not choose even to suppose that the pastor was about to remain in the land which he advised them to quit; and he therefore demanded, "At what

hour, my good friend, will you be ready to give us your blessing and to go with us?"

"My son," replied the pastor, "I will give my blessing on your union at any hour you like, for I dare not go out during the day. But, alas! I must not think of going with you. I say not that I will not come hereafter, if Heaven enable me to do so; but it must be after I have seen every one of my flock, who is willing to sacrifice temporal to eternal things, in safety in another land before me. Nay, nay, Albert," he said, seeing the count about to reply, "urge me not in this matter, for I am sure I am right, and, when such is the case, I must be immoveable. As soon as all who are willing to go are gone, I will obey the injunction of the king, which orders the pastors and ministers of our church to quit the realm immediately—"

"Indeed!" exclaimed the count. "Has such an order been issued? I never heard of it."

"You hear, my son, very little here," replied the old man. "Care is taken to keep unpleasant sights from the eyes of kings and courtiers. Pomp, and pageantry, and display, luxury, and feasting, and music, and games, and revelry, they are the things for palaces and capitals; not the groans and tears of the wronged and injured, not the cries and murmurs of the oppressed. Some days have passed since the order appeared throughout all the provinces, and many of my brethren have already obeyed. I will obey it, too, but not till the last."

"Oh," cried Clémence, "dear and excellent friend, do not, do not expose yourself too far. Remember how much we may need your counsel and assistance hereafter. Remember what a stay and support your presence may be to the whole of your flock in other lands."

"Those who do not fulfil their duties now, Clémence," said the pastor, "upon the pretext of fulfilling them better hereafter, will fulfil none at all, my child. But say no more, either of you; my determination is strong and fixed: and now, Albert," he added, with a faint smile, "find some way of measuring her finger for the ring that is to make her yours; and, if you could get some friendly notary to draw up a regular contract of marriage between you against this evening, all would be complete."

Albert of Morseiul took the fair hand of his promised bride, which she gave him with a blushing cheek, to

measure it for the ring that was to be the symbol of their union. Upon the very finger was that ring which he had rescued for her when it had been taken away by the band of Herval, the coronet and the cipher in diamonds; and as he gazed upon it, and tried it on his own finger to judge of the size, a brief feeling of curiosity passed through his heart, and he thought, "This indeed is strange; I am about to wed one of whose history, and fate, and circumstances both I myself, and almost every one around me, are ignorant."

He lifted his look to her face, however, while he thus thought. Those large, pure, beautiful eyes were gazing upon him with tenderness and trust, and, replacing the ring upon her finger, he sealed his faith and confidence upon that fair hand with a kiss.

CHAPTER VI.

THE KING'S CLOSET.

During the time that the young count was absent from Versailles, and busied, as we have represented, with those schemes on which his future wo or welfare seemed beyond all doubt to depend, a scene was taking place in the palace of the king, in which the count was more interested than he could have supposed possible, and which, as will be seen at the close of this history, was destined to affect him as much as any of his own proceedings.

The scene, then, was in the king's cabinet at Versailles. A clock of a rich and singular construction stood exactly before the monarch, marking out to him the portions of time which he could bestow upon each separate affair as it was brought before him. A large inkstand, containing innumerable pens, and a portfolio, half filled with writing, in the king's own hand, lay upon the table; wax of four different colours, blue, red, white, and yellow, were also placed before him, in a small case of marquetry, which contained likewise several seals, and an instrument of a peculiar form for spreading the wax: the walls were ornamented with a few

very choice small pictures; a number of maps were there also, and a few, but very few, books.

The monarch was seated in a large armchair, his right foot supported by a footstool, and his hand holding a pen as it rested on the table. The expression of his countenance was mild but intelligent, and before him stood—a little pale, indeed, and affecting, certainly, greater awe and terror than he really did feel—a man, whom, as we described him before, may be passed over in silence as far as his personal appearance is concerned. This was no other than Jerome Riquet, the valet of the Count of Morseiul; and behind him appeared the figure of Bontems, Louis's confidential attendant, who instantly retreated in silence from the chamber, on a slow nod of the head from the king.

"Your name," said the monarch, fixing his eyes full upon Riquet, "is, I understand, Jerome Riquet, and you are valet to the young Count of Morseiul?"

"I have been his faithful valet in the field, and the camp, and the court, and the castle, for these many years, sire," replied the man.

"And I hear," continued the king, "that you are a member of the holy Catholic church, while your lord is of the religion which its professors call reformed. Now, answer me truly, how have you contrived, during the long period of service, surrounded as you were by Huguenot fellow-servants and under a Huguenot lord—how have you contrived to fulfil the duties of your religion, I say, under such circumstances?"

"Oh, sire, nothing so easy," replied the man. "May it please your majesty, I was much better off in most respects than my brother Catholics; for on a fast day, sire, by my lord's order, on my account, there was either fish, or some other meager dish prepared, so that I had my choice. I could fast and grow thin, or sin and grow fat, as I thought fit."

The king's countenance fell a little at an uncalled-for joke in his presence, especially on a subject which, in his eyes, was of serious importance. Louis, however, was very rarely disposed to say a harsh word, unless it was impossible to help it; and he therefore passed over the valet's levity with merely the reproof of that displeased look, and then again demanded,

"So, then, your lord gave you every facility of fulfilling the duties of your religion?"

"The greatest, sire," replied the man. "Except when we were in Holland, where there was no Catholic church to be found, he has always driven me to mass as if with a scourge. Even at Morseiul, scarcely a Sunday passed without his telling me to go to mass, and asking me if I had been."

"This looks well for the young gentleman," said the king, seemingly well pleased with the account the man afforded. "We have had different stories at court—that he was rank and bigoted, and furious against the Catholic religion."

"Lord bless your majesty!" exclaimed the man, "he is more than three quarters of a Catholic himself; and, if the devil gets the other quarter, it will only be because the count is driven to him."

"Speak not profanely, sir, of things that are serious," said the king, "nor presume, in my presence, to venture upon such jests."

As he spoke the whole aspect of his countenance changed, his brow grew dark, his lip curled, his voice became deeper, his head more erect, and that indescribable majesty, for which he was famous, took possession of his person, making the unfortunate Jerome Riquet ready to sink into the earth.

"Now, sir," continued the king, "be not frightened, but give me clear and straightforward answers in a serious tone. What you have told me of your young lord is satisfactory to me. I am most anxious to do him good and to show him favour. I have marked his gallant conduct as a soldier, and his upright and noble demeanour as a French gentleman, and I would fain save him from the destruction to which obstinacy may lead him. You say that he is three parts a Catholic already, and would be one altogether if it were not—at least so I understand you—that some one drove him to the contrary conduct. Now, who is it drives him, sir? Speak to me plainly and explicitly, and no harm shall come to you. Have you lost your tongue, sir, or are you struck dumb?" the king continued, seeing that Riquet remained silent, while his whole frame seemed to work with terror and agitation.

Perhaps, had his lord been there, he might have discovered at once that Riquet was working himself up to assume an immense deal more of terror than he really felt; but the king, conscious of having assumed an over-

awing look, which he had often seen produce effects somewhat similar, believed the fear of the valet to be entirely real, and was not at all surprised to see Riquet suddenly cast himself at his feet and burst into an amazing flood of tears.

"If I have offended your majesty," cried the man, with a species of orientalism which was not at all displeasing to the ears of the despotic monarch of the French, "if I have offended your majesty, take my head! But you are now proceeding to question me upon matters in which what I have to tell and to speak of may produce the most terrible results. I know not every word I utter that I may not be doing wrong; I know not that every word may not cost my life; and unless your majesty will deign to grant me, in writing, your full and free pardon for all that I have done, I dare not, indeed I dare not, go on; or, if I do, terror will make me prevaricate, and attempt to conceal facts that the wisdom of your majesty will soon discover."

"Nay, nay," exclaimed the king; "before I give you such pardon, my good friend, I must know to what it extends. You may have committed twenty crimes for aught I know; you may be a relapsed heretic for aught I know."

"So help me God, sire, no," exclaimed the man, vehemently: "I am a sincere, devout, and zealous Catholic, and have been so all my life. Here is the certificate of the parish priest in Poitou, sire, in order that I might have the benefit of the indulgence," and he drew forth from his pocket a small piece of written paper, which Louis read attentively, and which bestowed upon him so high a character for devotion to the Catholic faith, and for various other extraordinary virtues, that Louis thought he could not be far wrong in assuring him of the pardon he wanted, especially as Riquet, while he read, had relapsed into a passion of tears, and the moments allotted to the task of examining him were fleeting rapidly away. "Well," he said, "to make you at ease, I will grant you the pardon, under some conditions."

"And pray put in, sire," cried Riquet, with real joy sparkling in his eyes, "pray put in that you take me under your royal protection, for fear the count should be angry, or any of the heretics should attempt to take vengeance upon me."

"That I will do also," replied Louis; and, taking the pen, he wrote rapidly a paper which, according to the old English form, would have been somewhat to the following effect, though the beginning of it, "*A toux ceux*," &c., may be somewhat freely translated.

"Know all men by these presents, that we, for especial reasons thereunto us moving, have granted our full and free pardon unto the person called Jerome Hardouin Riquet, for all crimes or offences that he may have committed up to the date of these presents, always excepted any crime which he may have committed against the holy church or our sovereign state of which he is not at this time charged, and which may be hereafter proved against him; and that we do also take the said Jerome Hardouin Riquet under our especial protection, warning all men to have regard unto the same, for such is our will.

"Louis."

The king read the paper over, paused for a moment, as if he yet hesitated whether he should give it or not, and then, with a sort of half smile, and a look expressive of something between carelessness and magnanimity, he held it out to the valet, who seized it and kissed it repeatedly. Then standing up before the monarch, he said,

"Now, sire, safe in your majesty's protection, I am ready and capable of answering distinctly and clearly anything that you may ask me."

The king took the paper up again, into which he had looked to ascertain the various denominations of Maître Riquet, and then recommenced his questions as follows, returning in the first place to the one which Riquet had left unanswered, "Who and what are the people who are driving, or are likely to drive, your master to remain obstinate in heresy?"

"Please your majesty," replied Riquet, "the principal persons are, a very reverend and respectable gentleman, called the Abbé de St. Helie; also, the intendant of the province of Poitou, our reverend father the Bishop of Poitiers, Monsieur de Louvois, and I am not very sure that good Monsieur de Rouvré himself has not a part."

The king gazed at the bold speaker for a moment or

two, as if doubtful of his real intention; asking of himself whether the man spoke sincerely and simply, or whether a daring jest, or a still more impudent sarcasm, lay concealed in the words he used. The man's previous terror, however, and the air of perfect unconsciousness of offence with which he spoke, did much to convince Louis that he had no double meaning. His tone, however, was sharp and angry as he asked, "How now, sir! How can some of the best and wisest, the most prudent and the most zealous men in the realm, drive any heretic to refuse obstinately the cup of salvation offered to him? I trust you mean no offence, sirrah!"

Jerome Riquet's countenance instantly fell, and with a thousand lamentations and professions of profound respect for Louvois and St. Helie, and every one whom the king might trust and favour, he declared that his only meaning was, that he believed his master and a great many other Protestants would have been converted long ago if they had been led rather than driven. He added, that he had heard the young count, and the old one too, say a thousand times, that some of the gentlemen he mentioned had done as much to prevent the Protestants from returning to the mother church, as Monsieur Bossuet had done to bring them back to it.

Louis paused and thought; and had not his prepossessions been so complete as they were, the plain truth which the valet told him might not have been unproductive of fruit. As it was, it went in some degree to effect the real object which Riquet had in view; namely, to impress the king with a notion that there was a great probability of the young count being recalled to the bosom of the Catholic church, provided the means employed were gentleness and persuasion.

It is very seldom, indeed, in this life, that we meet with anything like pure and unmixed motives, and such were certainly not to be expected in the bosom of Jerome Riquet. His first object and design was certainly to serve his master; but, in so serving him, he had an eye to gratifications of his own also; for, to his feelings and disposition, Versailles was a much pleasanter place than Morseiul, Paris a more agreeable land than Poitou. He used to declare that he was fond of the country, but liked it paved; that his avenues should always be houses, and his flocks and herds wear coats and petticoats. He naturally calculated, then, that if the king undertook

the task of converting the young count by gentle and quiet means, he would not fail to keep him in the delightful sojourning place of Versailles, while he, Jerome Riquet, among all the gods and goddesses of brass and marble which were gathered together in the gardens, might play the part of Proteus, and take a thousand shapes, as might suit his versatile genius.

The king thought over the reply of Riquet for some moments, somewhat struck by hearing that the arguments which the Protestants held among themselves were exactly similar to those which they had often put forth in addressing him. So much skill, however, had been employed by his council and advisers to open wide before him the path of error, and to close up the narrow footway of truth, that even when any one pulled away the brambles and briers with which the latter had been blocked up, and showed him that there was really another path, he refused to follow it, and chose the wider and more travelled road.

Thus his conclusion was, after those few minutes' thought,

"This is all very well and very specious; but as we do not trust to a sick man to point out the remedies that will cure him, so must we not trust to these Huguenots to point out what would be the best means of converting them. However, Master Jerome Riquet, it is not in regard to opinions that I sent for you; I want to hear facts, if you please. Now tell me: do you remember, upon a certain occasion, a proclamation having been sent down to be read in the town of Morseiul, the king's officers having been insulted, and, I believe, pelted with stones, and the proclamation torn down?"

"No, sire," replied Riquet, boldly, for he was telling a lie, and therefore spoke confidently. "I remember my master going out in haste one day to prevent, he said, any bad conduct on the part of the people, and I remember hearing that he had caused the proclamation to be made himself in the market-place, in spite of some riotous folk, who would willingly have opposed it."

"High time that such folk should be put down," said the king. "These are the peaceable and obedient subjects which the advocates of the Huguenots would fain persuade me that they are. But one question more on this head: did you see the young Count of Morseuil cause the gates of the town to be shut in the face of my

officers, or did you hear that he had done so, upon good authority?"

"No, sire, I neither heard nor saw it," replied Riquet; "and, for myself, I was safely in the castle during the whole day."

"Do you remember," continued the king, looking at the paper, "having carried notes or letters from your master to different Protestant gentlemen in the neighbourhood of Poitiers, calling upon them to assemble and meet him at the house of another Huguenot, named M. de Corvoie?"

"No, sire, oh no!" replied the man. "While we were at Poitiers, I only carried one note, and that was to the saddle-maker, who, in repadding one of my lord's saddles, had done it so as to gall the horse's back."

"Sir, you are lying," said the king, sternly.

Riquet once more cast himself upon his knees before the monarch, clasping his hands and exclaiming, "May I lose your majesty's favour for ever if I am not telling you the exact truth. Let any one who dares to say that I carried any other note than that which I have mentioned be confronted with me this moment, and I will prove that he is shamefully deceiving your majesty, for no other note did I carry, no, not even a love-letter. Otherwise I could and would not only tell your majesty the fact, but every word that the notes contained."

"This is very extraordinary," said the king, "and I shall take care to inquire into it."

"I trust your majesty will," replied the man, boldly, for it may be recollected that he had not carried any note, but had been merely charged with a message to M. de Corvoie: "I trust that your majesty will; for I assure you, on the faith of a valet de chambre, that no such transaction ever occurred. Did not they want to charge me—the very men who I dare say have brought this accusation—did they not want to charge me with having abstracted your majesty's commission to Messieurs St. Helie and Pelisson, and with having placed a pack of cards in its stead; and were they not brought to shame by its being found out that they themselves had done it, by fragments of the commission being found in one of their valises, wrapped like a dirty rag about an old tobacco-box?"

"How is this? How is this?" exclaimed the king. "I heard that the commission had been abstracted, but

I heard not this result; fragments of the commission wrapping a tobacco-box found in their own valises!"

"Ay, sire," replied the man, "'tis all too true, for the examination was conducted in presence of Monsieur de Rouvré;" and with earnest volubility Maître Jerome set to work, and, in his own particular manner, gave the monarch a long and detailed, but rapid account of what had taken place on the return of the Count de Morseiul to Poitiers, adding cunning commentaries in words, gesticulations, and grimaces, which scarcely left the king the power of retaining his due gravity, especially when Riquet personated to the life the worthy Curé of Gaudrieul on the discovery of the paper in his valise.

While he was in the very act of making this detail, however, the door of the royal cabinet was opened, and a man of a harsh and disagreeable countenance, with a face somewhat red and blotched, but with great fire and intelligence in his eyes, entered the room, pausing for a single moment at the door as if for permission.

"Come in, Monsieur de Louvois, come in," said the king. "This is Jerome Riquet, the valet of the Count de Morseiul, whom I told you I intended to examine. He puts a very different face upon several matters, however, from that which we expected to find," and the king briefly recapitulated to his famous minister the information he had received from Riquet, leaving out, however, the first part of the conversation between them, which contained matter that could not be very agreeable to the minister.

A somewhat sneering smile came upon Louvois's countenance as he listened; and he replied, "I am very happy to hear, sire, that the Count de Morseuil is so good and faithful a servant to your majesty. May I be permitted to ask this worthy person a question or two in your presence?"

The king bowed his head, and the minister, turning to Riquet, went on: "Although we have much more reason to think favourably of your master," he said, "than we had at first, yet there is one point in regard to which, though he did not actually commit a fault, he greatly neglected his duty; at least so we are led to believe. We are assured, that shortly before he came up to Versailles, a great meeting of Huguenots in the open air took place upon a wild moor within the limits of the young count's lands, which meeting, though held for the

peaceful purpose, we are told, of merely preaching in the open air, terminated in bloodshed, and an attack upon a small body of the king's dragoons who were watching the proceedings."

Louvois's eye was fixed upon the valet all the time he spoke, and Jerome Riquet was making up his mind to deny steadily any knowledge of the transaction; but suddenly his whole views upon the subject were changed by the minister coming to the head and front of the count's offence.

"Now," continued Louvois, "although there was certainly no law to compel the count to be present on such an occasion, yet, when he knew that a meeting of this kind was about to take place on his own estates, and that dangerous consequences might ensue, he would but have shown his zeal and duty in the service of the king by going to the spot, and doing all that he could to make the proceedings tranquil and inoffensive."

"But the count did go, sir," exclaimed Riquet, "the count did go, and I remember the fact of his going particularly."

"Are you ready to swear that he was there?" demanded Louvois.

"All I can say," replied the valet, "is, that he left home for the purpose of going there. I was not present myself, but I heard from every one else that he was."

"And, pray, at what hour did he return that night?" demanded Louvois, "for the events that I speak of did not take place till near nightfall; and, if the count had been there till the whole assemblage had dispersed, a thousand to one no harm would have ensued."

"I cannot exactly tell at what hour he returned," said the valet, who was beginning to fancy that he was not exactly in the right road. "It was after nightfall, however."

"Recollect yourself," said Louvois; "was it nine, ten o'clock?"

"It might be nearly ten," said the man.

"And I think," said Louvois, his lip curling with a smile, bitter and fiendlike, "I think you were one of those, were you not, who went down on the following morning to the spot where the young Marquis de Hericourt had been murdered? Your name is among those

who were seen there, so say no more. But now tell me, where is your master at this moment?"

Jerome Riquet smarted under a strong perception of having been outwitted; and the consequence was, that knowing, or at least believing, that when a man falls into one such piece of ill luck, it generally goes on, with a sort of run against him, he made up his mind to know as little as possible about anything, for fear of falling into a new error, and replied to Louvois's question that he could not tell.

"Is he in his hotel at Versailles or not, sir?" said the minister, sternly; "endeavour to forget for once that you are professionally a liar, and give a straightforward answer, for on your telling truth depends your immediate transmission to the Bastile or not. Was your master at home when you left the house, or out?"

"He was out then, sir, certainly," replied Riquet.

"On horseback or on foot?" demanded Louvois.

"On horseback," replied the man.

"Now answer me one other question," continued the minister. "Have you not been heard this very morning to tell the head groom to have horses ready to go to Paris?"

"Sir," said Jerome, with a look of impudent raillery that he dared not assume towards the king, but which nothing upon earth could have repressed in addressing Louvois at that moment, "Sir, I feel convinced that I must possess a valet de chambre without knowing it, for nobody on earth could repeat my words so accurately unless I had some scoundrel of a valet to betray them as soon as they were spoken."

"Sir, your impudence shall have its just punishment," said Louvois, taking up a pen and dipping it in the ink; but the king waved his hand, saying, "Put down the pen, Monsieur de Louvois! You forget that you are in the king's cabinet and in his presence! Riquet, you may retire."

Riquet did not need a second bidding; but, with a look of profound awe and reverence towards Louis, laid his hand upon his heart, lifted up his shoulders like the jaws of a crocodile ready to swallow up his head, and, bowing almost to the ground, walked backward out of the room. Louvois stood before the king for an instant with a look of angry mortification, which he suppressed with difficulty. Louis suffered him to remain thus, and,

perhaps, did not enjoy a little the humiliation he had inflicted upon a man whom he, more than once in his life, declared to be perfectly insupportable, though he could not do without him. At length, however, he spoke in a grave but not an angry tone, saying,

"From the questions that you asked that man just now, Monsieur de Louvois, I am led to believe that you have received some fresh information regarding this young gentleman—this Count de Morseiul. My determination up to this moment, strengthened by the advice of Monsieur de Meaux, Monsieur Pelisson, and others, is simply this: to pursue to the utmost the means of persuasion and conciliation, in order to induce him, by fair means, to return to the bosom of the Catholic church."

"Better, sire," replied Louvois, "far better cut him off like a withered and corrupted branch, unfit to be grafted on that goodly tree."

"You know, marquis," said the king, "that I am always amenable to reason. I have expressed the determination which I had taken under particular circumstances. If you have other circumstances to communicate to me which may make me alter that opinion, do so straightforwardly. Kings are as liable to error as other men; perhaps, indeed, more so; for they see truth at a distance, and require perspective glasses to examine it well, which are not always at hand. If I am wrong, I am ready to change my resolution, though it is always a part of a king's duty to decide speedily when he can do it wisely."

"The simple fact, sire," replied Louvois, with the mortification under which he still smarted affecting his tone of voice; "the simple fact is, as your majesty must have divined from the answers that man gave me, I have now clear and distinct proof that this Count de Morseiul has, throughout the insignificant but annoying troubles occasioned by the Huguenots in Poitou, been the great fomenter of all their discontent, and their leader in actual insurrection. He was not only present at this preaching in the desert, as these fanatics call it, and led all the proceedings by a speech upon the occasion highly insulting to your majesty's authority and dignity; with all which your majesty has already been made acquainted—"

"But upon not very clear and conclusive evidence,"

said the king. "Upon evidence, Monsieur de Louvois, which should condemn none of my subjects before a court of law, and, therefore, not before his sovereign. That he made a speech is clear; but some of the witnesses deposed that it was only to recommend moderation and tranquillity, and to beseech them on no account to appear on such occasions with arms."

"All hypocrisy, sire," replied Louvois. "I have had two of the dragoons with me this morning who were present with my unfortunate cousin, young De Hericourt, and they are quite ready and willing to swear that he, this Count de Morseiul, began the affray by striking that young officer from his horse."

"Without provocation?" demanded the king, his brow growing somewhat cloudy.

"They saw none given," replied Louvois, "and they were close to him. Not only this, but as it is shown that he did not himself return to his own house till late at night; that De Hericourt never returned at all; and that the two were angry rivals for the hand of this very Mademoiselle de Marly, there is strong reason to believe that they met after the affair on the moor, and that the unhappy young man was slain by the hand of the Count of Morseiul."

"This is something new, indeed," said the king. "Have you any further information, Monsieur de Louvois?"

"Merely the following, sire," replied the minister: "that, in the course of yesterday evening, the famous fanatic minister, Claude de l'Estang, the great stay of the self-styled reformed church, who, on more than one occasion in his youth, opposed your royal father in arms, and has, through life, been the great friend and adviser of these Counts of Morseiul, arrived in Paris, sent a billet down to the count this morning, and further, that the count immediately went up to visit him. Unfortunately, the news was communicated to me too late to take measures for tracking the count from Versailles to the hiding-place of the minister, whom it is desirable to lay hands upon, if possible. The count was tracked, indeed, to his own hotel in Paris; but, just before I came hither, the messenger returned to tell me that, as soon as Monsieur de Morseiul had arrived at his own house, he had gone out again on foot, and all further trace of him was lost. What I would urge upon your

majesty's attention, then, is this: that if you suffer him to trifle away many days, persuading you and good Monsieur Bossuet that he intends to yield and return to the church, you will suffer this affair of the preaching, the tumult, the murder of some of your loyal subjects, and the previous factious conduct of this young man, to drop and be forgotten; and you cannot well revive it after any length of time, as it is known already that full information has been laid before you on the subject. It does seem to me, sire," continued the minister, seeing that Louis was much moved by his reasonings, "it does seem to me that you have but one choice. You must either, believing, as I do, that the Count de Morseiul has not the slightest intention of ever becoming a convert from the heresy which he now professes, determine upon arresting him and punishing him for the crimes with which he is charged, should they be proved; or else you must grant him your royal favour and pardon, put it out of your own power to investigate further the matter, bestow upon him the hand of Mademoiselle de Marly, and leave fate and his own inclinations to convert him to the Catholic faith or not, as may happen."

"I certainly shall not take the latter alternative," replied the king. "The circumstances you have brought forward are extremely strong, especially this renewed visit to Claude de l'Estang. I am not one to show indecision where firmness is necessary, Louvois. In an hour or two, whenever I think it probable that he is returned to Versailles, I will send to require his presence. I will question him myself upon his belief, ascertain the probability of his conversion, and determine at once. If I find your statement correct—"

"Sire," cried Louvois, interrupting the king, as was too often his custom to do, "there is little use of your asking him any questions but one simple one; the answer to which must at once satisfy so great and magnanimous a mind as yours, and you will see that I entertain no feeling of personal enmity to the young man by the question that I am about to suggest. If he answer that question candidly, straightforwardly, and at once, in the manner and sense which your majesty can approve, give him your favour, raise him high, distinguish him in every manner: but if he prevaricate, hesitate, or answer in a sense and manner which your majesty cannot approve, send him to the Bastile."

"But what is the question?" demanded the king, eagerly. "What is the question, Monsieur de Louvois?"

"This, sire," replied Louvois: "Monsieur de Morseiul, I beg and command of you, as your king and your benefactor, to tell me whether there is or is not really any chance of your ever becoming a convert to the true Catholic faith of this realm?"

Louvois, by putting such a question into the king's mouth, showed not only how intimately he was acquainted with Louis's weaknesses, but also how well he knew the firmness and candour of the young Count de Morseiul. He knew, in short, that the latter would tell the truth, and that the former would condemn it.

"Nothing can be fairer," replied the king, "nothing can be fairer, Monsieur de Louvois. I will put that question to him exactly, and upon his answer to it he shall stand or fall."

"So thoroughly am I convinced, sire, of what the result will be," continued Louvois, "that I will beseech your majesty to give me authority to have him arrested immediately after he leaves you, in case you send me no order to the contrary."

"Certainly," replied the king, "certainly. I will sign the order immediately."

"Allow me to remind you, sire," replied Louvois, "that you signed one the other day, which is already in the hands of Cantal, only you ordered me to suspend the execution. That will do quite well, and Cantal will be at hand to put it in force."

"Be it so," said the monarch, "be it so; but let Cantal be in the way at the time I send for the young count, that I may signify to him that he is not to arrest the count if the answer I receive satisfies me. And now, Monsieur de Louvois, what news regarding this business of Dunkirk?"

The king and his minister then turned to other matters; and having concluded the principal part of the affairs they had in hand, were talking somewhat lightly of other matters, when one of the attendants, who knew that the hour of Louvois was over, opened the door and interrupted their further conversation by announcing, to the surprise of both, that the Count de Morseiul was in waiting, beseeching earnestly a moment's audience of the monarch. The king turned his eyes upon Louvois, as if to inquire, "What is the meaning of this?"

but, a moment or two after, he bade the attendant give the count admission.

"Then I had better take my leave, sire," said the minister, "and give Cantal a hint to be in readiness;" and taking up the papers from which he had been reading some extracts to the monarch, Louvois bowed low and left the room.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNFORESEEN BLOW.

To have judged by the affable and agreeable smile which Louvois bore upon his countenance as he passed the young Count de Morseiul in one of the anterooms, a stranger to that minister would have imagined that he was extremely well disposed towards the gentleman whom he was in fact labouring to ruin. No such error, however, could have taken place with regard to the aspect with which the king received the young count, which, though not frowning and severe, was grave and somewhat stern.

The countenance and conduct of Albert of Morseiul were calm, tranquil, and serene; and Louis, who, intending to cut the interview as short as possible, had risen, could not help saying within himself, "That looks not like the face of a man conscious of crime."

As the king paused while he made this remark to himself, the count imagined that he waited for him to begin and open the cause of his coming; and, consequently, he said at once, "Sire, I have ventured to intrude upon your majesty, notwithstanding your intimation that you would send for me when your convenience served, inasmuch as I have matters of some importance to lay before you which would bear no delay."

"Pray," demanded Louis, "pray, Monsieur de Morseiul, before you proceed further, be so good as to inform me whether the matters to which you allude refer to yourself or to the state."

"By no means to myself," replied the count, who was not altogether satisfied with the king's tone and manner.

"They refer entirely to the safety of the state and your majesty. On my own affairs I would not have presumed to intrude upon you again."

"Very well, then," said the king, dryly, "since such is the case, you will be good enough to communicate whatever you may have to say upon such subjects to Monsieur de Louvois, Monsieur de Seignelai, or Monsieur Colbert de Croissy, as the case may be; such being the usual course by which matters of importance are brought to my ears. And now, Monsieur de Morseiul, though I have but a single moment to attend to anything at this particular time, let me ask you one question: Is there or is there not any hope of my receiving the great gratification of being enabled to show you as much favour and distinction as I could wish, by your abjuring the heresy in which you have been unfortunately brought up, and seeking repose in the bosom of the Catholic church?"

The Count de Morseiul felt that a crisis in his fate had arrived; but, with the question put to him so simply and straightforwardly, he felt that he could not evade the decision, and he would not prevaricate even for safety.

"If, sire," he said, "what your majesty demands is to know my own opinion upon the subject at this moment—"

"I mean, sir," said the king, "plainly, Do you believe that there exists a likelihood of your becoming converted to the Catholic faith?"

"I do not believe so, sire," replied the count. "With deep and profound respect for your majesty, with much veneration and regard for Monsieur Bossuet, and with all the advantage of being even now reading some of his works upon religion, I should be deceiving your majesty, I should be wronging myself, I should be showing myself unworthy of the high opinion which Monsieur de Meaux has expressed of me, if I did not clearly and distinctly state that I see no likelihood whatsoever of my changing opinions instilled into me in infancy."

"Nay, nay," cried the king, considerably moved and struck by the calm yet respectful dignity of the young count's demeanour, "think better of it! In God's name, think better of it! Let me hope that the eloquence of Bossuet will prevail; let me hope that I may yet have

the opportunity of conferring upon you all those favours that I am most eager to bestow."

There was an eagerness and sincerity in the king's manner which affected the count in turn. "Alas, sire," he said, "what would I not do to merit the favour of such a king? but still I must not deceive you. Whatever hopes your majesty is pleased to entertain of my conversion to the established religion of the realm, may be derived from the knowledge—from the powerful gratitude—which your majesty's generosity and high qualities of every kind must call up in your subjects and your servants; or they may arise from your knowledge of the deep and persuasive eloquence of the Bishop of Meaux: but they must not arise from anything that I have said or can say regarding the state of my mind at this moment."

"I grieve, Monsieur de Morseiul, I grieve bitterly to hear it," replied the king; and he then paused, looking down thoughtfully for some moments; after which he added, "Let me remonstrate with you, that nothing may be left undone which I can do to justify me in treating you as I could wish. Surely, Monsieur de Morseiul, there can be nothing very difficult to believe in that which so many, nay, I may say, all the holiest, the wisest, and the best have believed since the first preaching of our religion. Surely the great body of authority which has accumulated throughout ages in favour of the Catholic church, is not to be shaken by such men as Luther and Calvin. You yourselves acknowledge that there are—as there must ever be when heavenly things are revealed to earthly understanding—mysteries which we cannot subject to the ordinary test of human knowledge, in the whole scheme of our redemption; you acknowledge it; and yet with faith you believe in those mysteries, rejecting only those which do not suit you, and pretending that the Scripture does not warrant them. But, let me ask you, upon what authority we are to rely for the right interpretation of those very passages? Is it to be upon the word of two such men as Luther and Calvin, learned though they might be, or on the authority of the church, throughout all ages, supported by the unbiased opinions of a whole host of the learned and the wise in every century? Are we to rely upon the opinion of two men originally stirred up by avarice and bad passions, in preference to the whole body of saints and

martyrs, who have lived long lives of piety and holiness, meditating upon those very mysteries which you reject. I am but a weak and feeble advocate, Monsieur de Morseiul, and should not, perhaps, have raised my voice at all after the eloquence of a Bossuet has failed to produce its effect; but my zealous and anxious wish both to see you reunited to the church, and to show you that favour which such a conversion would justify, have made me say thus much."

The young count was too prudent by far to enter into any theological discussions with the king, and he therefore contented himself with replying, "I fear, sire, that our belief is not in our own power. Most sincerely do I hope and trust, that, if I be now in the wrong, God may open my eyes to the truth. At present, however—"

"Say no more, sir! say no more!" said the king, bending his head as a signal that the young nobleman might retire. "I am heartily sorry for your state of mind! I had hoped better things. As to any other information you may have to communicate, you will be pleased to give it to one of the secretaries of state, according to the department to which it naturally refers itself."

The king once more bowed his head, and the count, with a low inclination, retired. "I had better go at once to the apartments of Louvois," he thought; "for this affair of Hatréaumont may be already on the eve of bursting forth, and I would fain have the last act of my stay in my native land one of loyalty to the king who drives me forth."

When he reached the open air, then, he turned to the right to seek the apartments of Louvois; but, ere he reached them, he was met by the Chevalier de Rohan, whom we have already mentioned, who stopped him with a gay and nonchalant air, saying, "Oh, my dear count, you have made my fortune! The hundred louis that you lent me have brought good luck, and I am now a richer man than I have been for the last twelve months. I won ten thousand franks yesterday."

"And, doubtless, will lose them again to-day," answered the count. "I wish to Heaven you would change this life; but, my dear chevalier, I must hasten on, for I am on business."

"When shall I have an hour to talk with you, count?" exclaimed the Chevalier de Rohan, still detaining him.

"I want very much to explain to you my plan for raising myself; I am down low enough, certainly, just now."

"When next we meet, chevalier—when next we meet!" said the count, smiling, as he thought of his approaching departure. "I am in great haste now."

But, ere he could disengage himself from the hold of the persevering Chevalier de Rohan, he felt a hand laid gently upon his arm, and, turning round, saw a gentleman whose face was not familiar to him.

"Monsieur le Comte de Morseiul, I believe," said the stranger; and, on the count bowing his head, he went on. "I have to apologize for interrupting your conversation; but I have a word for your private ear of some importance."

The Chevalier de Rohan had by this time turned away, with a nod of the head; and the count replied to the other, "I am in some haste, sir. Pray what may be your pleasure?"

"I have an unpleasant task to perform towards you, Monsieur de Morseiul," said the stranger; "but it is my wish to execute it as gently and delicately as possible. My orders are to arrest and convey you to the Bastile."

The Count de Morseiul felt that painful tightening of the heart which every man, thus suddenly stopped in the full career of liberty, and destined to be conveyed to long and uncertain imprisonment, to be shut out from all the happy sounds and sights of earth, to be debarred all the sweet intercourses of friendship and affection, has felt and must feel. At the same time, all the various points of anxiety and difficulty in his situation rushed through his mind with such rapidity as to turn him dizzy with the whirling numbers of such painful thoughts. Clémence de Marly, whose hand was to have been his that very night; the good old pastor, his friends, his servants, all might, for aught he knew, be kept in utter ignorance of his fate for many days. The hands, too, of the unscrupulous and feelingless instruments of despotic power would be in every cabinet of his house and his chateau, invading all the little storehouses of past affections, perhaps scattering to the winds all the fond memorials of the loved and dead. The dark lock of his mother's hair, which he had preserved from boyhood; the few fragments of her handwriting, and some verses that she had composed shortly before her death;

all his father's letters to him, from the time that he first sent him forth, a gallant boy girt with the sword of a high race, to win renown, through all that period when the son, growing up in glory, shone back upon his father's name the light that he had thence received, and paid amply all the cares which had been bestowed upon him, by the joy of his great deeds, up to that sad moment, when, with a trembling hand, the dying parent announced to his son the commencement and progress of the fatal malady that carried him to the grave. All these were to be opened, examined, perhaps dispersed by the cold, if not by the scornful; and all the sanctities of private affection violated.

Such and a thousand other such feelings, rapid, innumerable, and, in some instances, contradictory to and opposing each other, rushed through his bosom in a moment at the announcement of the officer's errand. The whole facts of his situation, in short, with every minute particular, were conjured up before his eyes, as in a picture, by those few words; and the first effort of deliberate thought was made while De Cantal went on to say, "As I have said, Monsieur de Morseiul, it is my wish to save you any unnecessary pain, and therefore I have ordered the carriage which is to convey you to the Bastile to wait at the further end of the first street. A couple of musketeers and myself will accompany you inside, so that there will be no unnecessary parade about the matter; and I doubt not that you will be liberated shortly."

"I trust it may be so, sir," replied the count; "and am obliged to you for your kindness. I have violated no law, divine or human; and though, of course, I have many sins to atone towards my God, yet I have none towards my king. I am quite ready to accompany you, but I suppose that I shall not be permitted to return to my own house, even to seek those things which may be necessary for my comfort in the Bastile."

"Quite impossible, sir," replied the officer. "It would be as much as my head is worth to permit you to set foot in your own dwelling."

The thoughts of the young count, as may well be supposed, were turned at that moment particularly to Clémence de Marly; and he was most anxious, on every account, to make his servants acquainted with the fact of his having been arrested, in the hope that Riquet

would have the good sense to convey the tidings to the Hôtel de Rouvré. To have explained this in any degree to the officer who had him in charge, would have been to frustrate the whole design; and therefore he replied,

"Far be it from me, sir, to wish you to do anything but your duty: but you see, as I have been accustomed through my life to somewhat perhaps too much luxury, I should be very desirous of procuring some changes of apparel. That, I am aware, may be permitted to me, unless I am to be in the strictest and most severe kind of imprisonment which the Bastile admits of. You know by the orders you have received whether such is to be the case or not, and of course I do not wish you to deviate from your orders. Am I to be kept *au secret?*"

"Oh dear no, not at all," replied the officer. "The order merely implies your safe custody; and, probably, unless some private commands are given farther, you will have what is called the great liberties of the Bastile: but still that would not, by any means, justify me in permitting you to go to your own house."

"No," replied the count; "but it renders it perfectly possible—if you are, as I believe, disposed to treat a person in my unfortunate situation with kindness and liberality—for you to send down one of your own attendants to my valet, Jerome Riquet, with my orders to send me up, in the course of the day, such clothes as may be necessary for a week. Let the message be verbal, so as to guard against any dangerous communication; and let the clothes be addressed to the care of the governor of the prison, in order that they may be inspected before they are given to me."

"Oh, to that, of course, there can be no objection," replied the young officer. "We will do it immediately. But we must lose no time, Monsieur de Morseiul, for the order is countersigned by Monsieur de Louvois, and you know he likes prompt obedience."

The count accompanied him at a rapid pace, deriving no slight consolation under the unhappy circumstances in which he was placed, at the idea of Clémence being fully informed of the cause of his not appearing at the time he had promised. At the spot which Monsieur de Cantal had mentioned was found a plain carriage, with a coachman and lackey in gray, and two musketeers of the guard seated quietly in the inside. While the count

was entering the vehicle, the officer called the lackey to his side and said, "Run down as fast as possible to the house of the Count de Morseiul, and inquire for his valet. What did you say his name is, Monsieur de Morseiul?"

"Jerome Riquet," said the count.

"Ay, Jerome Riquet," said the officer. "Inquire for his valet, Jerome Riquet: tell him that the king has judged it right that his master should pass a short time in the Bastile, and that, therefore, he must send up thither to-night, addressed to the care of the governor, what clothes he judges the count may require. The house is next door but one to that of Monsieur de Meaux. Run quick, and take the little alley at the end of the street, so that you may join us at the corner of the road."

The young officer then entered the carriage, and the coachman drove on; but, before they proceeded along the high road, they were obliged to pause for a moment or two, in order to give time for the arrival of the lackey, who, when he came, spoke a few words through the window to Monsieur de Cantal, in the course of which the word "exempt" was frequently audible.

"That is unpleasant," said the young officer, turning to the count: "I find that an exempt has been sent to your house already—to seal up your papers, I suppose; and, on hearing the man give the message to one of your servants, he was very angry, it seems, sending word to wait for him here; but, as I am not under his orders or authority, I think I shall even tell the coachman to go on."

He said this in a hesitating tone, however, evidently afraid that he had done wrong; and, before he could execute his purpose of bidding the carriage proceed, the lackey said, "Here comes the exempt, sir. Here he is."

In a moment after, a tall, meager, gaunt-looking man, dressed in the peculiar robes of an exempt of the court, with a nose extraordinarily red, scarcely any eyebrows, and a mouth which seemed capable of swallowing the vehicle that he approached and all that it contained, came up to the side of the carriage, and spoke to the young officer through the window. The words that passed between them seemed to be sharp; and at length the exempt exclaimed, in a louder tone, so as to be completely audible to the count, although his articulation

was of that round spluttering kind which rendered it very difficult to make out what he said, "I shall do so, however, sir; I shall do so, however. I have authority for what I do. I will suffer no such communications as these, and I will not leave the carriage till I have seen the prisoner safely lodged in the hands of the governor of the Bastile."

"Well, sir," replied the officer, a little heated, "if you choose to overstep your duty, I cannot help it, and certainly shall not attempt to prevent your going with the coachman, if you think fit. In the inside of the carriage you shall not come, for there I will guard my prisoner myself."

"That you may do, sir, if you like," cried the exempt, shaking the awful mass of wig in which his head was plunged: "but I will take care that there shall be no more communications. Linen! What the devil does a prisoner in the Bastile want with linen? Why, in the very first packet sent to him there might be all sorts of treasonable things written upon the linen. Have we not heard of ink of sympathy and all manner of things?"

"Well, well, sir," exclaimed the young officer, "I saw no harm in what I was doing, or else I should not have done it. But get up, if you are going to get up, for I shall order the coachman to go on."

The exempt sprang up the high and difficult ascent which led to a coachbox of those days, with a degree of activity which could hardly have been expected from a person of his pompous dignity, and the coach then drove on upon its weary way to Paris.

"A very violent and self-conceited person, indeed, that seems to be," said the count. "Do you know him?"

"Not I," replied the young officer, "though he threatens to make me know him pretty sufficiently, by complaining to Louvois about sending for those cursed clothes of yours."

The officer was evidently out of temper; and the count therefore left him to himself, and fell into a fit of musing over his own situation. That fit of musing, dark and painful as it was, lasted without cessation till the vehicle entered one of the suburbs of the great city of Paris. There, however, it met with an interruption of a very unexpected kind; for, in trying to pass between two heavy carts which were going along in opposite directions, the coachman contrived to get the wheels of

the carriage locked with those of both the other vehicles; and with such force was this done, that the lackey behind was thrown down and hurt, the exempt himself nearly pitched off the coachbox, and obliged to cling with both his hands, while the coachman lost his hat and the reins.

The idea of making his escape crossed the mind of the Count de Morseiul; but he evidently saw that, even if he were out of the carriage, surrounded as he was by a great number of people, without any large sum of money upon his person, and, with the eyes of the officer, the musketeers, and the exempt upon him, it would be vain to make the attempt.

To render the situation of the vehicle as bad as possible, one of the horses, either irritated by the uncouth and not very gentle terms with which the coachman attempted to back out of the difficulty, or galled by part of the cart pressing upon it, began to kick most vehemently; and Monsieur de Cantal, the officer, having previously sent the two musketeers to aid the coachman and the exempt in disentangling the carriage, now showed a strong inclination to go himself. After looking anxiously at the Count de Morseiul for a moment, he at length said, "I must either go and set those men right, or suffer the carriage to be kicked to pieces. If I go, Monsieur de Morseiul, will you give me your word not to try to escape?"

The count paused for an instant; but then the same consideration returned upon him, and he replied, "Go, sir, go: I do give you my word."

The officer then sprang out; but scarcely had he been away a moment, when the head of the exempt appeared looking in at the window. "Hist, hist, Monsieur de Morseiul!" he said, in a voice totally different from that which he had used before, and which was wonderfully familiar to the ears of the count; "hist, hist! On the very first linen you receive, there will be information written for you. It will be invisible to all eyes till it is held to the fire. But the flame of a strong lamp will do, if you cannot sham an ague and get some wood to warm you."

"I can scarcely believe my eyes," said the count, in the same low voice.

"Do not doubt them, do not doubt them," said the exempt. "I knew of your arrest before you knew of it

yourself, but could not warn you, and was making all ready when the man came to the hotel. I have sacrificed much for you, count; as goodly a pair of eyebrows as ever valet had in this world; and I dare not blow my nose for fear of wiping off the paint: Louvois outwitted me this morning, and now I'll outwit him if I have but time. Heavens, how that beast is plunging and kicking! The pin I ran into its stomach is sticking there yet, I suppose; ay, she's quieter now; here they come, and I must splutter. Monsieur," he said, as the officer now returned to the side of the carriage, "Monsieur, this is guarding your prisoner securely, is it not? Here I come to the window, and find not a single soul to prevent his escaping, when he might have got out in a moment, and run up the Rue de Bièvre, and passed through the Rue de l'Ecole, and across the Place de l'Université, and then down to the river—"

"Psha!" said the officer, impatiently; "let me have no more of this impertinence, sir. The count gave me his word that he would not escape. If I deliver my prisoner safely at the Bastile, that is sufficient, and I will not have my conduct questioned. If you have any complaint to make, make it to Monsieur de Louvois. Come, get up, sir, don't answer; the carriage is now clear, and enough of it left together to carry us to the Bastile. Go on, coachman."

The coachman, however, pertinaciously remained in a state of tranquillity till the exempt was once more comfortably seated by his side; and then the carriage, rolling on through the back streets of the capital, made a little turn by the Rue de Jean Beausire into the Rue St. Antoine, and approached the gates of that redoubted prison, in which so many of the best and noblest in France have lingered out, at different times, a part of their existence. To few, very few, have the tall gloomy towers of that awful fortress appeared without creating feelings of pain and apprehension; and however confident he might be of his own innocence, however great might be his trust in the good providence and protection of God, however strong he might be in a good cause and a firm spirit, it cannot be denied that Albert of Morseiul felt deeply and painfully, and with an anxious and a sickening heart, his entrance into that dark, solitary abode of crime, and sorrow, and suffering.

The carriage drew up just opposite the drawbridge, and the officer, getting out, left his prisoner in charge of the two musketeers, and went forward to speak to the officer on guard at the gates. To him he notified, in due form, that he had brought a prisoner, with orders from the king for his incarceration; and the carriage was kept for some time standing there, while the officer on guard proceeded to the dwelling of the governor to demand the keys of the great gates. When he had obtained them and returned, the doors were opened; the guard was turned out under arms; the great drawbridge let down; the bell which communicated with the interior of the building rung; and the vehicle containing the count slowly rolled on into the outer court, called the Cour de Gouvernement.

There the carriage paused, the governor of the prison having expressed his intention of coming down to receive the prisoner from the hands of the officer who brought him: otherwise the carriage would have gone on into the inner court. A short pause ensued, and at length the well-known Besmaux was seen approaching, presenting exactly that appearance which might be expected from his character; for the traits of debauchery, levity, and ferocity which distinguished his actual life had stamped themselves upon his countenance in ineffaceable characters.

"Ah, good-day, Monsieur de Morseiul," he said, as the door of the carriage opened, and the count descended. "Monsieur de Cantal, your very humble servant. Gentlemen, both, you had better step into the Corps de Garde, where I will receive your prisoner, Monsieur de Cantal, and read the letters for his detention."

Thus saying, with a slow and important step he walked into the building, seated himself, called for pen and ink, and a light, and then read the king's letter for the arrest and imprisonment of the Count de Morseiul.

"Monsieur de Louvois is varying these letters every day," he said; "one never knows what one is doing. However, there stands the king's name, and that is quite enough; so, Monsieur de Morseiul, you are welcome to the Bastile. You are to have our great liberties, I suppose. I must beg you to give me your sword, however, and also everything you have about your person, if you please; letters, papers, money, jewels, and everything else, in short, except your seal or your signet ring,

which you keep for the purposes about to be explained to you."

With very painful feelings the count unbuckled his sword and laid it down upon the table. He then gave up all the money that he possessed, one or two ordinary papers of no import, and the other usual articles of the same kind which are borne about the person. The note which he had received from Clémence in the morning he had luckily destroyed. While this was doing, the governor continued to write, examining the different things that he put down before him, and he then said, "Is this all, sir?"

"It is," replied the count, "upon my word."

"One of the men must put his hands into your pocket, count," said the governor; "that is a ceremony every one must undergo here." The prisoner shut his teeth hard, but made no remark and offered no resistance, though, if he had given way to his feelings, he would certainly have dashed the man to the ground at once, who, with unceremonious hands, now searched his person. When that also was over, Besmaux wrote down a few more words at the end of the list of things he had made out, and handed it to the count to read. The only observation that the young nobleman made was, that the governor had put down his sword as having a silver hilt, when the hilt was of gold.

"Ah, it is of gold, is it?" said De Besmaux, taking it up and looking at it, while several of the attendants who stood round grinned from ear to ear. "Well, we will alter it, and put it down gold. Now, Monsieur de Morseiul, will you have the goodness to sign that paper, which, with these letters, we fold up thus! and now, with the seal which you retain, you will have the goodness to seal them, and write your name round the seal."

With all these forms the count complied, and the governor then intimated to him that he was ready to conduct him into the interior of the Bastile, the spot where they then were, though within the walls and drawbridge, being actually considered as without the chateau.

"Here, then, I take leave of you, Monsieur de Morseiul," said the officer who had brought him thither, "and I will do my best, on my return to Versailles, to ensure that the clothes you want shall be sent, notwithstanding the interference of that impertinent exempt, who took himself off on the outside of the drawbridge,

and has doubtless gone back to lay his complaint against me before Louvois. I know the king, however; and knowing that he wishes no one to be treated with harshness or severity, have therefore no fear of the consequences."

The count held out his hand to him frankly. "I am very much obliged to you, Monsieur de Cantal," he said, "for the kindness and politeness you have shown me. It is at such moments as these that kindness and politeness become real benefits."

The officer took his hand respectfully, and then, without more words, retired; the carriage passed out; the gates creaked upon their hinges; and the heavy drawbridge swung slowly up, with a jarring sound of chains and heavy iron-work sadly harmonious with the uses of the building, which they shut out from the world.

The governor then led the way towards the large and heavy mass of gloomy masonry, with its eight tall gaunt towers, which formed the real prison of the Bastile, and approached the gate in the centre that looked towards the gardens and buildings of the arsenal. The drawbridge there was by this time down, and the gates were open for the admission of the prisoner; while what was called the staff of the Bastile stood ready to receive him, and the guard of the grand court was drawn up in line on either side.

"You see we have an extensive court here," said the governor, leading the way. "It is somewhat dark, to be sure, on account of the buildings being so high; but, however, some of our people, when they have been accustomed to it for a year or two, find it cheerful enough. We will put you, I think, Monsieur de Morseiul, into what is called the Tower of Liberty, both because the name is a pleasant name—though it is but a name after all, either here or elsewhere—and also because it is close to the library; and as long as you have the great liberties, as they are called, you may go in there and amuse yourself. Most of you Huguenots, I believe, are somewhat of bookworms; and when a man cannot find many of the living to talk to, he likes just as well to talk to the dead. I do not suppose that, like some of our inmates here on their first arrival, you are going to mope and pine like a half-starved cat or a sick hen. It is hard to bear at first, I acknowledge; but there's nothing like bearing a thing gayly, after all. This way, Monsieur de

Morseiul, this way, and I will show you your apartment."

He accordingly led him to the extreme angle of the grand court on the left hand, where a large transverse mass of architecture, containing the library, the hall of the council, and various other apartments, separated that part from the lesser court, called the Court of the Well. A small stone doorway opened the way to a narrow spiral staircase, which made the head dizzy with its manifold turnings; and about half way up the steps the governor paused, and opened a door which communicated by a narrow but crooked passage with a single tolerable sized chamber, handsomely furnished.

"You see we treat you well, Monsieur de Morseiul," said Besmaux; "and if anything can be done to make your residence here pleasant, we shall not fail to do it. There is but little use, if any, of causing doors to be locked or sentries to be placed. Some of the guards or some of the officers of the staff will be very willing to show you as much as is right of the rest of the building: and, in the mean time, can I serve you?"

"In nothing, I am afraid," replied the count. "I have neither clothes, nor baggage, nor anything else with me, which will put me to some inconvenience till they send it to me; but I understand that orders have been given to that effect already; and I should only be glad to have any clothes and linen that may arrive as soon as possible."

"I will see to it, I will see to it," replied Besmaux. "You have dined, of course, count; but to-night you will sup with me."

"If my stay here is to be long," said the count, after thanking the governor for his invitation, "I should, of course, be very glad to have the attendance of a domestic. I care not much, indeed, whether it be one of my own, or whether it be one with which you can supply me for the time; but I am not used to be without some sort of attendance."

The governor smiled. "You must not be nice in the Bastile, Monsieur de Morseiul," he said; "we all do with few attendants here, but we will see what can be done for you. At present we know nothing but that here you are. The order for your reception is of that kind which leaves everything doubtful but the fact that, for the time, you are not to be confined very strictly; and, indeed, as the letter is somewhat informal, as every-

thing is that comes from the hands of Monsieur de Louvois, I must write to him again for farther information. As soon as I receive it, the whole shall be arranged as far as I can to your satisfaction. In the mean time we will give you every indulgence, as far as our own general rules will allow, though perhaps you will think that share of indulgence very small."

The count expressed his thanks in commonplace terms, well knowing the character of Besmaux, and that his fair speeches only promised a degree of courtesy which his actions generally failed to fulfil.

After lingering for a moment or two, the governor left his prisoner in the abode assigned to him, and returned to his own dwelling without locking the door of the apartment.

There are states of mind in which the necessity of calm contemplation is so strong and overpowering, that none of the ordinary motives which affect our nature have any influence upon us for the time; states in which even vanity, the most irritable, and curiosity, the most active of our moral prompters in this world, slumber inactive, and leave thought and judgment paramount. Such was the case with the Count de Morseiul. Although he had certainly been interested with everything concerning the prison, which was to be his abode for an undefined length of time; although all that took place indicative of his future destiny was, of course, not without attraction and excitement, he had grown weary of the formalities of his entrance into the Bastile, less because they were wearisome in themselves than because he longed to be alone, and to have a few minutes for calm and silent reflection.

When he did come to reflect, however, the prospect presented was dark, gloomy, and sad. He was cut off from the escape he had meditated. The only thing that could have saved him from the most imminent dangers and difficulties, the only scheme which he had been able to fall upon to secure even the probability of peace and safety upon earth, had been now frustrated. The charges likely to be brought against him, if once averred by the decision of a court of justice, were such as, he well knew, could not and would not be followed by pardon; and when he looked at the chances that existed of those charges being sanctioned, confirmed, and declared just, by any commission that might sit to try

him, he found that the probabilities were altogether against him; and that, if party feeling biased the opinion of one single magistrate, his cause was utterly lost. In cases where circumstantial evidence is everything—and therein lies the horror and danger of judging by circumstantial evidence—so light a word, so small a turn will give a completely different view to the whole circumstances of any case, will so completely prejudice the question, and bias the minds of hearers, that he was quite aware, if any zealous Catholics should be engaged in the task of persecuting him to the last, he could scarcely hope to escape from such serious imputations as would justify perhaps his permanent detention, if not his death. He had been at the meeting of the Protestants on the moor, which, though not illegal at the time, had been declared to be so since. He had then addressed the people, and had exhorted them to tranquillity and to peace; but where were the witnesses to come from in order to prove that such was the case? He had gone unarmed to that meeting; but others had been there in arms and with arms concealed. He himself, with his own hand, had struck the first blow, from which such awful consequences had sprung; but how was he to prove the provocation which he had, in the first instance, received; or the protection which he had afterward given to the base and unworthy young man, who had escaped from death by his means only to become a murderer the moment after. The only witnesses that he could call were persons of the party inimical to the court, who might now be found with difficulty—when emigration was taking place from every part of France—who would only be partially believed if they could be heard, and who would place themselves in danger by bearing testimony on his behalf.

The witnesses against him would be the hired miscreants who had fired into a body of unoffending people, but who were of the religion of the judges, the unscrupulous adherents of a cause to which those judges were bound by every tie of interest and of prejudice, and who were serving under a monarch that, on one terrible occasion, had stepped in to overrule the decision of a court of justice, and to inflict severer punishment than even his own creatures had dared to assign. Death, therefore, seemed to be the only probable end of his imprisonment; death, or eternal loss of liberty! and the

count knew the court, and the character of those with whom he had to deal, too well to derive any degree of consolation from the lenity with which he was treated at first.

Had he been now in heart and mind as he was not very long before, when, quitting the army on the signature of the truce, he had returned to the home of his ancestors, the prospect would have been far less terrible to him, far less painful. His heart was then in some degree solitary, his mind was comparatively alone in the world. He had spent the whole of his active life in scenes of danger and of strife. He had confronted death so often, that the lean and horrid monster had lost his terrors, and become familiar with one who had seemed to seek his acquaintance as if in sport. His ties to the world had been few; for the existence of bright days, and happy, careless moments, and splendid fortune, and the means of luxury and enjoyment at command, are not the things that bind and attach us to life. The tie, the strong, the mighty tie of deep and powerful affection to some being or beings like himself, had been wanting. There were many that he liked; there were many that he esteemed; there were many he protected and supported even at that time; but he knew and felt that, if he were gone, the next moment they would be liked, and esteemed, and supported, and protected by others, and would feel the same, or nearly the same, towards those who succeeded as towards him, when he had passed away from the green and sunny earth, and left them to the care of newer friends.

But now other ties had arisen around him; ties, the strength, the durability, the firm pressure of which he had never known before. There was now a being on the earth to whom he was attached by feelings that can only once be felt; for whom he himself would have been ready to sacrifice everything else; who for him and for his love had shown herself willing to cast from her all those bright and pageant-like days of splendour in which she had once seemed to take so much delight. The tie, the strong tie of human affection—the rending of which is the great and agonizing pang of death—had twined itself round his heart, and bound every feeling and every thought. The great, the surpassing quality of sentient being, the capability of loving and being loved, had risen up to crush and to leave void all the

lesser things of life, but also to give death terrors that it knew not before; to make the grave the bitter parting-place where joy ends for ever, and to poison the shaft that lays us low with venom that is felt in agony ere the dark, dreamless sleep succeeds and extinguishes all.

But was this all that rendered his situation now more terrible than it had been before? Alas, no! The sense of religion was strong, and he might confidently trust that, though earthly passion ended with the grave, and the mortal fire of his love for Clémence de Marly would there become extinct; he might confidently trust that, in another world, with his love for her exalted as well as purified, rendered more intense and sublime, though less passionate and human, they should meet again, known to each other, bound together by the immortal memory of vast affection, and only distinct from other spirits, bright and happy as themselves, by the glorious consciousness of love, and the intense happiness of having loved well, loved nobly, and to the last.

Such might have been his consolation in the prospect of parting with her who had become so dear to him, if he had left her in calm and peaceful security, in a happy land, and without danger or difficulty surrounding her. But when he thought of the religion she had embraced, of the perils which surrounded her at every step, of the anguish which would fall upon her at his fate, of the utterly unprotected, uncomforted, unconsoled state in which she must remain, the heart of the strong warrior failed, and the trust of the Christian was drowned in human tears.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CONSPIRATORS.

In such dark anticipations and gloomy reflections as we have mentioned in the end of the last chapter, the Count de Morseiul passed the solitary hours, till a servant appeared to conduct him to the supper-table of the governor. Had he not wished to think, indeed, he might

easily have found amusement, either in the court below, where a number of the other prisoners were walking, or in the small library of the chateau; but he did wish to think; and however sad and sombre the stream of thought might be at that moment, its course only seemed too soon interrupted.

The governor was civil, and even intended to be very affable; but Albert of Morseiul was not of a character to be amused with the anecdotes of a debauched soldier's life; and the only variety which the conversation of Besmaux afforded were tales of the regency of Ann of Austria, which, though they might at any other moment have served to entertain an idle hour, were too light and insignificant to take hold of a mind agitated and writhing like that of the count.

The governor thought his guest very dull; and, after having made various essays to enliven him, he proposed that they should sit down to play for sums, written upon pieces of paper, which were to be accounted for after the count's liberation. The young nobleman would have certainly lost the good opinion of Besmaux for ever by declining this proposal, had it not so occurred that two incidents intervened which prevented him from pressing it. The first was the arrival of a large packet of linen and other clothes for the use of the count; and the governor, who found a real pleasure in the execution of the task of a jailer, proceeded to examine with his own eyes and hands every separate article which had been sent. It may be supposed that, after the intimation which he had received on the road, the young count's heart felt no slight agitation and interest during the scrutiny; but if anything was written in the manner which Riquet had stated, no discovery thereof was made; and having completely satisfied himself, Besmaux ordered the packet to be carried to the chamber of the count.

The little excitement thus produced had scarcely worn away, when the great bell was heard to ring, and the officer upon guard appeared to demand the keys. According to the usual form, the governor demanded, "For whose admission?"

"For the admission," said the officer, reading from a scrap of paper, "for the admission of Louis de Rohan, called the Chevalier de Rohan."

The governor started up in some surprise. "On what charge?" he demanded.

"For high treason," replied the officer; and Besmaux immediately gave orders for the chevalier to be brought to his apartments. "Monsieur de Morseiul," he said, "you will be good enough to follow that porte-clef, who will conduct you back to your chamber. Do you feel it cold? for the king allows firing."

"I have felt it slightly cold," the count replied, "and, of course, the state of a prisoner does not tend to warm the heart."

"Give wood to the count in his chamber," said Besmaux to one of the turnkeys, who had entered at the same time with the officer on guard; "and now, good-night, count. No word to the prisoner if you pass him on the stairs!"

The count rose and departed; and, as the governor had anticipated, met the Chevalier de Rohan at the foot of the stairs. That unfortunate gentleman was guarded by a musketeer on either side, and a man holding a torch preceding him. The moment that his eye fell upon the Count de Morseiul, he stopped, and appeared as if he were about to speak: but an officer who was behind, and in whom the Count de Morseiul instantly recognised the Marquis of Brissac, major of the king's guard, exclaimed aloud, "Pass on, Monsieur de Rohan!"

The count, who certainly had no desire to hold any communications with him, merely bowed his head, and, followed by the turnkey, passed out into the court. Though Brissac knew him well, he took not the slightest notice of him as he passed, and the count was conducted to his chamber in the Tower of Liberty, as it was called, where firing and lights were almost immediately afterward brought him. On leaving him, however, the turnkey showed, by locking the heavy door without, that the name of the tower had but little real meaning, and the harsh sound of the grating iron fell heavy and painfully upon the count's ear.

There was, however, the hope before him of receiving some intelligence from his friends without; and as soon as he had made sure that the turnkey was gone for the night, he eagerly opened the packet of clothes that had been sent, and endeavoured, by the means which had been pointed out, to discover anything which might be written on them. At first he was disappointed, and was beginning to fear that Riquet had been pre-

vented from executing the purpose which he had entertained. At length, however, as he held one of the handkerchiefs before the fire, some slight yellow lines began to appear, grew gradually darker and darker, and assumed the form of letters, words, lines, and sentences. The first thing that was written at the top was in the hand of the valet himself, and contained words of hope and encouragement. It was to the following effect:

"Fear not; you shall soon be free. The lady has been told of all. The priest has gone safely back to Poitou. No suspicion attaches to any one, and means are taking to do away the evil."

The next sentences were in a different handwriting; and perhaps the young count might not have been able to recognise whose it was—so different did it seem upon the linen, and in that ink, from the usual writing of Clémence—had not the words been sufficient to show him from whom it proceeded.

"Fear not, dear Albert," the writing went; "I have heard all and grieve, but do not despond. I have been sent for to see one to-morrow morning early who is all-powerful. She loved me in my childhood; she promised me many things in my youth which I was too proud to accept; but I will now cast all pride away for the sake of him I love."

A few lines more were written still farther down; but, as the count was turning eagerly to read them, numerous sounds were heard from the court below, the clang of soldiers grounding their arms, and voices speaking, and the moment after various footsteps might be distinguished ascending the staircase which came towards the room. Fearful that he should be discovered, the count concealed the handkerchief in his bosom; but the steps passed by the door of his apartment, and, immediately after, heavy footfalls were heard in the room above, with voices speaking in sharp and angry tones. Those sounds soon ceased above, however; four or five persons were heard to descend the stairs, and then all became quiet, except that a quick footstep was still heard pacing backward and forward in the apartment over head.

"That is the Chevalier de Rohan," thought the count. "What crime, I wonder, can that weak libertine have

committed, to deserve the rigorous imprisonment to which it seems he is to be subjected?"

With such brief thought, however, he dismissed the subject from his mind, and turned once more to the writing. By this time it had nearly vanished; but, being again exposed to the fire, it reappeared, though more faintly than before. Fearful of interruption, the count turned to the last lines which he had not read. They seemed to him, as far as he could judge, to be written in the hand of the Chevalier d'Evran, whom, to say sooth, in the joys, and fears, and agitations of the few preceding days, he had nearly forgotten.

"I have just returned to Paris, dear Albert," it said, "having gone down to Poitou to secure evidence, which they would never have suffered to transpire if some friend of yours had not been upon the spot. I have secured it. Fear not, therefore, for I and your belle Clémence are labouring together to set you free."

Oh, human nature, strange and extraordinary state of existence, how many contradictions dost thou contain! Although filled with such good hopes, although containing such proofs of friendship, although conveying such important intelligence, the lines written by the Chevalier d'Evran were not altogether pleasing to the Count de Morseiul, and he felt sensations that he was angry with himself for feeling, but which all his schooling of his own heart could scarcely banish.

"I shall hate myself," he continued, "if I feel thus. Must there ever be some counterbalancing things in life and in feeling to poise the bad against the good, and to make us less happy, less wise, less generous than we otherwise might be? Here new sensations have sprung up in my bosom of a deeper and finer kind than I ever knew before; and must there come some petty jealousy, some small, low, mean want of confidence, even in those I esteem and love, to debase me as much as those other feelings might elevate me! I will think of such things no more; and will only think of Louis with gratitude and affection."

Thus saying, or, rather, thus thinking, he read the lines that had been written by Clémence, and found therein a balm and a consolation which healed all the evil of the other. Having done so, his next care was to efface the writing; but that he found by no means difficult, damping the handkerchief in the cruise of wa-

ter which had been left for him, and which in a few minutes left not a vestige of the lines which had been traced for his eye alone. He sat up for some time after this examination, soothed and calmed by the tidings he had received, and certainly far more tranquil in every respect than during the first few hours of his confinement.

The waning of the lights, however, which had been given to him, warned him, at length, that it was time to retire to rest; and, after some brief prayers to the Almighty for guidance, protection, and deliverance, he undressed himself, extinguished the lights, and lay down to seek repose; but it was in vain that he did so; for, as he lay on the small prison bed which was allotted to him, and gazed round upon the massy walls of the chamber in which he was confined, with the flickering light of the half-extinguished fire flashing from time to time on all the various objects round about, the sensation of imprisonment, of the utter loss of liberty, of being cut off from all correspondence or communication with his fellow-men, of being in the power and at the mercy of others, without any appeal against their will, or any means of deliverance from their hands, came upon him more strongly, more forcibly than ever, and made a heart, not easily bent or affected by any apprehensions, sink with a cold feeling of deep and utter despondency.

Thus passed several hours, till at length weariness overcame thought, and he obtained sleep towards the morning. He was awakened by the entrance of one of the turnkeys, accompanied by the major of the Bastile; but the tidings which the latter officer brought to the Count de Morseiul were by no means pleasant, or calculated to confirm the hopes that the words of Clémence and the Chevalier d'Evran had held out to him.

"I am sorry to tell you, Monsieur de Morseiul," he said, "that the governor last night received orders from Monsieur de Louvois to place you in stricter confinement; and he is therefore obliged to say that you can no longer be permitted to quit your chamber. Anything that can be done, consistent with his duty, to render your confinement less painful to you, shall be done, depend upon it."

The officer was then bowing as if to retire; but the count stopped him by asking, "Is there any objection

to my inquiring, sir, whether there is a cause assigned for this new order?"

"In regard to that I am as ignorant as yourself," replied the major. "All I can tell is, that the order was brought by Monsieur de Brissac at the same time that he conveyed hither the Chevalier de Rohan;" and, without waiting for any further questions, he quitted the room in haste; and the turnkey, having brought the count his breakfast, and, as far as possible, arranged the room with some degree of neatness, followed the major and locked the door.

The full horrors of imprisonment now fell upon the Count de Morseiul, and the day wore away without his holding any further intercourse with any human being, except when his dinner and his supper were brought to him by one of the turnkeys. We need not pause upon his sensations, nor describe minutely all the dark and horrible anticipations which rose, like phantoms, to people his solitary chamber. Night came at length, and this night, at least, he slept; for the exhaustion of his corporeal frame, by the intense emotions of his mind, was far greater than that which could have been produced by a day of the most unusual exercise.

Day had scarcely dawned on the following morning, however, when he was roused by two of the officers of the prison entering his chamber, and desiring him to rise, as an officer from the king was waiting to convey him to the royal chamber at the arsenal, where a commission was sitting for the purpose of interrogating him and his accomplices. The count made no observation, but hastened to do as he was directed; and, as soon as he was dressed, he descended the narrow and tortuous staircase into the great court of the Bastile, where he found the soldiers of the garrison drawn up in arms on either side, together with a number of officers belonging to the staff of the garrison, various turnkeys and other jailers, and in their hands, evidently as prisoners, the unfortunate Chevalier de Rohan and an old white-headed man, apparently of seventy years of age, with a shrewd and cunning countenance, more strongly expressive of acuteness than vigour of mind.

Without suffering him to speak to any one, the officers of the prison placed him in file immediately after the Chevalier de Rohan—a jailer, however, interposing between each of the prisoners and the one that followed

—and thus, between a double row of soldiery, they marched on into the *Cour du Gouvernement*, as if they were about to be conducted to the house of the governor. When they reached that court, however, they turned at once to the left, mounted a flight of steps leading to a raised terrace which overlooked the water, and then passing onward, approached the grating which separated that court from the gardens of the arsenal.

At the grating appeared a large body of musketeers, commanded by an officer of the name of Jouvelle, who had served under the Count de Morseiul himself, and into his hands the officers of the Bastile delivered their prisoners, who were then marchèd, under a strong escort, to the arsenal, where the commission was sitting. All the gates of the gardens and of the building itself, the count remarked, were in the hands of the musketeers of the king, and not another individual was to be seen besides the soldiery in the gardens usually so thronged with the good citizens of Paris.

Passing through several of the narrow and intricate passages of the building, the three prisoners were placed in a room which seemed to have been destined for a military messroom; and, while they were kept separate by their guards, an inferior officer was sent out to see whether the commission was ready to proceed. In a few minutes he returned with two officers of the court, who demanded the presence of Louis Chevalier de Rohan.

The interrogation of this prisoner lasted for a great length of time; but, at the end of about an hour and a half, the same officers reappeared, demanding the presence of Affinius Vandenenden, upon which the old man whom we have mentioned rose and followed them out of the room. The chevalier, however, had not returned with the officers; and during the space of half an hour longer, the Count de Morseiul remained in suspense in regard to what was proceeding. At length the officers once more appeared, and with them the captain of the musketeers, de Jouvelle, who, while the ushers pronounced the name of "Albert Count of Morseiul," passed by the prisoner as if to speak to one of the soldiers, saying in a low voice as he did so, "Be of good cheer, count, they have said nothing to criminate you."

The count passed on without reply, and followed the ushers into another chamber at the farther end of the

passage, where he found a number of lawyers and counsellors of state assembled as a royal commission, and presided by the well-known La Reynie. The aspect of the room was not that of a court of justice, and it was evident that the commissioners met simply for the purpose of carrying on the preliminary interrogatories. The count was furnished with a seat, and after a whispering consultation for a moment between La Reynie and one of his brethren, the former commenced the interrogation of the count by assuring him of the clemency and mercy of the king's disposition, and adjuring him to tell, frankly and straightforwardly, the whole truth, as the only means of clearing his reputation and re-establishing himself in the royal favour.

To this exordium the Count de Morseiul merely replied by an inclination of the head, very well knowing that with some of the gentlemen whom he saw before him it was advisable to be as niggardly of speech as possible. La Reynie then proceeded to ask how long he had been acquainted with the Chevalier de Rohan, and the count replied that he had known him for many years.

"When did you see him last?" demanded the judge, "and where?"

"In the gardens of Versailles," answered the count, calmly, "not five minutes before I was myself arrested."

"And upon what occasion," demanded the judge, "did you see him previously?"

"I saw him," replied the count, "when I visited the Duc de Rouvré at Poitiers, and once also upon the road between Paris and Versailles, about three or four days ago."

"Are you sure that these are the only days that you have seen him?" demanded the judge. "Recollect yourself, Monsieur le Comte. I think you must have forgotten."

"No, I have not," replied the count. "I have only seen him on these two occasions since I arrived in Paris, and two or three times during my stay at Poitiers."

"Ay, there is the fact," said La Reynie. "You saw him frequently at Poitiers."

"I also saw various blacksmiths, and lackeys, and horseboys," said the count, unable to conceive what

connexion there could exist between any charges against himself and those against the Chevalier de Rohan, who was known to be a zealous Catholic, "and with them, the blacksmiths, lackeys, and horseboys, I had as much to do as I had with the Chevalier de Rohan, and no more."

"And pray," continued La Reynie, in the same tone, "what private conversations took place between you and the chevalier at Poitiers? To the best of your recollection, repeat the substance thereof."

The count smiled. "To the best of my recollection, then," he said, "the substance was as follows: 'Good-day, Count de Morseiul. Good-morning, Monsieur de Rohan. What a beautiful day it is, Monsieur de Morseiul. It is the most charming weather I remember. There is a sad want of rain, Monsieur le Chevalier, and I fear the poor peasantry will suffer. Do you go out with the duke to hunt to-day? I think not, for my horses are tired.' Such, sir, is the substance of the only private conversations that took place between myself and the chevalier at Poitiers."

"Was that all, Monsieur de Morseiul?" demanded La Reynie, with tolerable good humour. "Are you sure you have forgotten nothing of equal importance?"

"I believe I have not forgotten one word," replied the count, "except on one occasion, Monsieur de Rohan said to me, 'Your hat is unlooped, count:' when, I am afraid, I looped it without thanking him."

"Well, then, now to somewhat longer and more important conversations, my good young gentleman," said La Reynie. "What has passed between you and the Chevalier de Rohan when you have met him since your arrival at the court?"

"Why, sir," replied the count, with a grave and somewhat grieved air, "I give you my word that nothing passed between the Chevalier de Rohan and myself which at all affected his majesty's service, and I would fain, if it were possible, avoid entering into particulars which, if told to everybody, might be painful to a gentleman of my acquaintance, who, I trust, may yet clear himself of any serious charge."

"Monsieur le Comte de Morseiul," said the Counsellor Ormesson, "we respect your motives, and have regard to the manner in which you have expressed them; but the Chevalier de Rohan, I am sorry to in-

form you, stands charged with high treason upon very strong presumptive evidence. There are particular circumstances which induce a belief that you may have had something to do with his schemes. We trust that such is not the case; but it is absolutely necessary that you should clearly and explicitly state the nature of any transactions which may have taken place between you and him, both for your own safety, for his, and out of respect and duty to the king."

"Then, sir, I have no other choice," replied the count, "but to yield to your reasons, and to beg that you would put your questions in such a shape that I may answer them distinctly and easily."

"Very well, Monsieur de Morseiul," said La Reynie; "we have always heard that you are a gentleman of honour, who would not prevaricate even to save his own life. Pray inform us what was the nature of the conversation between you and the Chevalier de Rohan on the morning of the 23d of this month."

"It was a very short one," replied the count, somewhat surprised to see what accurate information of his proceedings had been obtained. "The chevalier overtook me as I was going to Versailles, and on that occasion Monsieur de Rohan informed me that he had lost a large sum at the gaming-table on the night before, and begged me to lend him a hundred louis, in the hopes of recovering it by the same means. I advised him strongly to abstain from such proceedings, but, of course, did not refuse to lend him what he asked."

"Then did you lend him the hundred louis on the spot?" demanded La Reynie.

"No," replied the count; "I told him that I had not such a sum with me, but promised to send it to him at his lodgings in the course of the afternoon, which I did as soon as ever I arrived at Versailles."

"Pray how happened it, Monsieur de Morseiul," demanded Ormesson, "that, as you were going to Versailles, and the chevalier overtook you going thither also, you did not ride on together, as would seem natural for two gentlemen like yourselves?"

"Nay," replied the count, smiling, "that I think is pressing the matter rather too far, monsieur. My society might not be pleasant to the chevalier, or the reverse might be the case; or we might have other busi-

ness by the way. A thousand circumstances of the same kind might occur."

"Well, then, I will put the question straightforwardly and at once," said Ormesson. "Had you, or had you not, any reason to believe that the Chevalier de Rohan was at that time engaged in schemes dangerous to the state?"

"None in the world," replied the count, "and no such feelings or ideas whatsoever had any share in preventing my riding on with the Chevalier de Rohan."

The commissioners looked at each other for a moment with an inquiring glance, and then La Reynie placed before the count a note, which was to the following effect:

"My dear Count,

"I have received what you sent me, for which I return you many thanks, and I have not the slighest doubt, by your assistance, to be able to accomplish the purpose I have in view.

"Your devoted,

"The Chevalier de Rohan."

"Pray, Monsieur de Morseiul," said the counsellor, "do you recognise that note?"

"Most assuredly," replied the count. "I received that note from the Chevalier de Rohan on the very evening of the day we have just mentioned."

"And, pray, what is the interpretation you put upon it?" demanded La Reynie.

"Simply," replied the count, "that he had received the hundred louis which I sent him, and hoped, by employing them at the gaming-table, to be enabled to win back the sum that he had lost."

"It seems to me," said the judge, "that the note will very well bear two interpretations, count; and that, supposing a gentleman unfortunate enough to have laid schemes for introducing a foreign enemy into the country, or for causing any of the provinces of the kingdom to revolt, and supposing him, at the same time, to be greatly straightened for money and assistance—it seems to me, I say, that the note before us is just such a one as he would write to a friend who had come to his aid at the moment of need, either by giving him aid of a pecuniary or of any other kind."

"All I can say, sir," replied the count, "is that the note before you I received from the Chevalier de Rohan, and that no other interpretation than the one I have given was, or could be, put upon it by me. I knew of no schemes whatsoever against the state, and the chevalier himself had certainly no other meaning than the one I have assigned. It will be very easy for you, however, gentlemen, to place the note before the chevalier, and make him explain it himself. Though an unfortunate gentleman, he is still a gentleman of honour, and will tell you the truth. We have had no conversation together upon the subject. We have not even interchanged a word as we came hither, and you can compare his statement with mine."

"Perhaps that may have been done already, Monsieur de Morseiul," said Ormesson; "but, at all events, we think we may close your examination for to-day. The interrogation may be resumed at a future period, when other things have become manifest; and we have only at present to exhort you, on all occasions, to deal frankly and openly with the court."

"Such is always my custom to do, sir," replied the count. "I stand before you conscious of my innocence of any crime whatsoever, and, having nothing to conceal, am always ready to state frankly and truly what I know, except when by so doing I may wound or injure others."

Thus saying, he bowed to the commissioners and retired. At the door of the chamber he found two musketeers waiting for his coming out, and, being placed between them, he was once more conducted back to the Bastile by the same way he had come. He was then led by the turnkeys, who were in waiting to receive him, to the same apartment which he had previously occupied; but before nightfall it was notified to him that the liberties of the Bastile were restored to him, and he received some slight solace by knowing that he should not, for some time at least, be confined to the solitary discomfort of his own apartment, with no occupation but to stride from one side to the other, or, gazing out of the narrow window, endeavour to gain a sight of what was passing in the Rue St. Antoine.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EXECUTION.

Within the walls of the Bastile, some weeks passed over almost without incident, but not without pain to the Count de Morseiul; but it would be tedious to detail all the feelings and the thoughts that crossed each other in his bosom during that period. He was still allowed a great degree of liberty, was permitted to take exercise in the great court, to converse with many of the other prisoners, and to hear whispers of what was taking place in the world without. But none of those whispers gave him any tidings of those he loved, any indication of his own probable fate, or any news of the church to which he belonged; and he remarked with pain, that while many of the other prisoners received visits from their friends and acquaintances, either no one sought to see him, or else those who did so were excluded by some express order.

He grieved over this, and perhaps felt, with some degree of bitterness of spirit, that the iron of captivity might not only enter into the soul, but might wear and corrode the mind on which it pressed. Such feelings made him at once apply himself eagerly to everything that could occupy his thoughts, and turn them from contemplations which he knew to be not only painful, but hurtful also; and he soon created for himself a number of those occupations which many an unhappy man besides himself has devised at different times for the solace of captivity.

The library, however, was his greatest enjoyment. Though so fond of all manly exercises, and famous for his skill therein, he had from his youth loved the communing with other minds, in the pages which the hand of genius has traced, and which have been given forth as the deliberate effort of the writer's spirit. He loved, I say, that communing with other men's hearts and minds which is undisturbed by discussion, or wordy dispute, or any of the petty vanities that creep into the living conversation even of the great, the learned, and

the good; and now, though the library was small, and, perhaps, not very well selected, yet there was many a book therein which afforded him sweet occupation during some, at least, of the melancholy hours of imprisonment.

At other times he walked the length of the courtyard, gaining where he could a gleam of sunshine; and rather than suffer his thoughts, as he did so walk, to dwell upon the painful theme of his own fate, he would count the very stones of the pavement, and moralize upon their shapes and colours. Almost every day during the period we have mentioned, the guard was turned out, the prisoners having their liberties were ordered to keep back, and a train of others in the stricter state of imprisonment were marched out to the arsenal. Among these was usually the unhappy Chevalier de Rohan; and the wistful, longing gaze with which one day he looked round the court as he passed through, seeming to envy the other prisoners the sort of liberty they enjoyed, caused the Count de Morseiul to task severely his own heart for the repinings which he felt at his own situation.

Various little occurrences of the same kind took place from time to time, affording a momentary matter of interest in the midst of the dark sameness of the prison life. At one period, during the whole of several nights, the Count de Morseiul heard at intervals voices which seemed to be shouting through speaking-trumpets. The place from which the sound proceeded varied constantly; and the young prisoner could only conclude that some friends of one of the sad inhabitants of the Bastile were prowling round it, endeavouring to communicate intelligence. He listened eagerly, in the supposition that those sounds might be addressed to him; but though from time to time he could catch a single word, such as "dead," "told," &c., he could make no continuous sense of what was said.

The first time this occurred was shortly after his examination before the commission, and it continued, for three or four nights, to be repeated at different hours; but still the sounds were too distant for him to ascertain the meaning of the speakers, and he was obliged to content himself with believing that this intelligence was not intended for himself, and hoping that it had been more distinct to the unfortunate person for whose ears

it was designed.* After having listened during the whole of one night, and the words not being repeated, he determined to ask one of his fellow-prisoners, who had the liberty like himself of walking in the court, whether he had heard it, and had been able to make out what was said.

The personage whom he fixed upon in his own mind for that purpose was a tall, upright, elderly man, with a soldier-like air, and a good deal of frankness of manner, approaching, perhaps, to what is called bluffness, without being in the slightest degree rude or uncivil. He seemed to seek nobody, but to converse willingly with any one when he was sought; gave his opinion in few words, but distinctly, accurately, and positively; bore his imprisonment with perfect lightness and indifference; never referred in the slightest degree to the cause thereof or to his own history, though without appearing to avoid the subject at all; and, in short, impressed strongly on the minds of those who saw him, and were accustomed to judge of the world, that he was a frank, upright, straightforward soldier, accustomed to various kinds of endurance, and bearing all with manly firmness and resolution.

He spoke French with great fluency and accuracy; but at times, in conversing with him, the Count de Morseiul had fancied he could remark a foreign accent, though very slight, and he was inclined to believe that the old officer was one of the Weimerians who had served so long in the pay of France. His countenance, indeed, was not like that of a German; there was more quickness and brightness of the eye, and the features were more elongated, and somewhat sharper than is common among the Teutonic races. But still a great part of the Weimerian troops had been levied on the borders of the Rhine, where the mixture of French and other blood often makes itself strongly to be remarked among the German population. His ordinary walk was from one corner of the courtyard to the opposite angle, which gave the utmost extent of space that could be had; and there the young count, on descending the

* The words were intended for the unfortunate Chevalier de Rohan, and were "Hatréaumont est mort, et n'a rien dit." The unhappy prisoner, like the Count de Morseiul, was not able to distinguish the meaning of his friends; otherwise those words, if he had shaped his course accordingly, would have ensured his safety.

staircase, found him walking up and down with his usual quick pace and erect carriage. Though the old man neither paused nor noticed him further than by a passing "Good-morning, sir," the count joined him, and at once spoke of the matter in question.

"Have you heard," he said, "during this last night or two, some people shouting, apparently through speaking-trumpets, as if they wished to convey intelligence to one of us prisoners?"

"Once or twice very faintly," replied the other. "But I am on the opposite side of the prison to you, you know, and the sounds I heard seemed to come from your side, or, at all events, not farther round than the Well Tower. Do you think they were addressed to you?"

"I think not," replied the count; "and if they were, I certainly could make nothing of them. I looked out of my window to get a sight as far as possible of the speakers by the moonlight the other night, but I was not successful; for I can see, as I am placed, into the little Place St. Antoine, but no farther. However, I tried to distinguish their voices, and certainly they were not those of any one I know."

"A speaking-trumpet makes a great difference," replied his companion. "I should like to have heard them more distinctly."

"Do you think they were intended for you?" said the count.

"Oh dear no," replied the other; "nobody can have anything to tell me. If ever my liberty comes, it will come at once; and as to either trying me or punishing me in any other way than by imprisonment, that they dare not do."

"That is in some degree a happy situation," said the count. "But I scacely know how that can be; for, judging by my own case and that of many others, I have no slight reason to believe that they dare try or punish any man in France, whether guilty or not."

"Any Frenchman you mean, count," replied the stranger; "but that does not happen to be my case; and though my own king may be rascal and fool enough to let me stay here wearing out the last days of a life, the greater part of which has been devoted to the service of himself and his ungrateful ancestors, yet I do not believe that he dare for his life suffer me to be pub-

fully injured. A trial would, as a matter of course, be known sooner or later. They may poison me, perhaps," he continued, "to keep me quiet, though I do not think it either. Your king is not so bad as that, though he is a great tyrant; but he is not bloody by his nature. However, Monsieur de Morseiul, as I am not in here for any crime; as I never had anything to do with a conspiracy of any kind; as I am not a native of this country, or a subject of your king; as I have not a secret in the world, and little more than will serve to feed and clothe me, I do not see that any one can have either object or interest in hallooing at me through a speaking-trumpet."

"You have excited my curiosity," said the count, "and a Frenchman's curiosity, you know, is always somewhat intrusive; but as you have just said that you have not a secret in the world, it will seem less impertinent than it otherwise would be if I ask what, in the name of fortune, you can be here for?"

"Not in the least impertinent," replied the other. "I am in here for something of the same kind that they tell me you are in here for: namely, for differing from the King of France in regard to transubstantiation; for thinking that he'll go to the devil at once when he dies, without stopping half way at a posthouse called Purgatory, which a set of scoundrels have established for their own particular convenience; and for judging it a great deal better that people should sing psalms and say their prayers in a language that they understand, than in a tongue they know not a word of. I mean, in short, for being a Protestant; for if it had not been for that, I should not have been in here. The fact was, I served long in this country in former times, and having taken it into my head to see it again, and to visit some old friends, I undertook a commission to bring back a couple of brats of a poor cousin of mine, who had been left here for their education. Louis found out what I was about, declared that I came to make Protestant converts, and shut me up in the Bastile, where I have been now nearly nine months. I sent a message over to the King of England by a fellow-prisoner who was set at liberty some time ago. But every one knows that Charles would have sold his own soul by the pound, and thrown his father, and mother, and all his family into the scale, for the sake of a few crowns at any time. This popish rascal,

too, who is now on the throne, doubtless thinks that I am just as well where I am; so I calculate upon whistling away my days within the four walls of this court. I don't care, it can't last very long. I was sixty-five on the third of last month, and though there feels some life in these old limbs, the days of Methuselah, thank God, are gone by, and we've no more kicking about now for a thousand years. I shouldn't wonder," he continued, "if the people you heard were hallooing to that unfortunate Chevalier de Rohan, whom they dragged through to be interrogated again. They say he'll have his head chopped off to a certainty. If we could have found out what the people said, we might have told him, for prisoners will get at each other, let them do what they like."

"I listened for one whole night," said the count, "but found it quite in vain. The judges, I suppose, are satisfied that I had nothing to do with this business of the Chevalier de Rohan, otherwise they would have had me up again for examination."

"God knows," replied his companion. "Tyranny is like an actor at a country fair, and one never knows which way he will kick next."

Thus passed the conversation between the count and the old English officer, whose name, somewhat disfigured indeed, may be found written in the registers of the Bastile as arrested on suspicion; for which crime he, like many others, was subjected to imprisonment for a lengthened period. He and the Count de Morseiul now usually took their walk together, and in his society the young nobleman found no small delight, for there was a sort of quaint indifference which gave salt and flavour to considerable good sense and originality of thought. The old man himself seemed to take a pleasure in conversing with the young count; which was evidently not the case with the generality of his fellow-prisoners. One morning, however, towards the end of the period we have mentioned, the sound of the falling drawbridge was heard, the soldiers drew up in double line, the order for all the other prisoners to fall back was given, and the Chevalier de Rohan, followed by two or three other prisoners, among whom were Vandenenden and a lady, were brought in as if from examination.

The countenances of almost all were very pale, with the exception of that of the Chevalier de Rohan, which was inflamed, with a fiery spot on either cheek, while

his eyes flashed fire, and his lips were absolutely covered with foam. Four times between the great gate of the court and the tower in which he was confined, he halted abruptly, and, turning round with furious gestures to the guards and jailers who surrounded him, poured forth a torrent of fierce and angry words, exclaiming that he had been deceived, cheated; that the king's name had been used to assure him of safety, and that now the king had retracted the promises and was going to murder him.

It was in vain that the guards tried to stop him, and endeavoured to force him onward. Still he turned round as soon as ever he had an opportunity, and shouted forth the same accusation with horrible imprecations and even blasphemies. The second prisoner, who seemed to be a military man, paused and regarded the chevalier with a stern and somewhat scornful air; but the lady and the old man, Vandenenden, were drowned in tears, and, from all the count saw, he concluded that the trial of the chevalier and his accomplices had either terminated in their condemnation, or else had taken such a turn as showed that result to be inevitable.

From that time none of the prisoners who had the liberties of the Bastile were allowed to remain in the court when the chevalier and his accomplices passed through it, an order being given before the gates were opened for every one to retire to his own apartments. Three days after this new regulation, such an order having been given, the count obeyed it willingly, for the weather had become cold and damp, and the court of the Bastile felt like a well. He had obtained permission to take some books out of the library, in which there was no fire allowed; and, sitting by the embers in his own apartment, he was endeavouring to amuse himself by reading, when the sounds of what seemed to him carts, in greater numbers than usual, mingled with the tongues of many persons speaking, called him to the little window of his chamber.

He saw that the small Place St. Antoine was filled with a crowd of people surrounding two or three large carts, as they seemed, but he could not make out what the persons present were about; and, after looking on for a few minutes, he returned to his book.

Everything within the walls of the Bastile seemed to be unusually still and quiet, and for rather more than an

hour and a half he read on, till some sound of a peculiar character, or some sudden impression on his own mind which he could not account for, made him again rise and hasten to the window. When he did so, a sight was presented to his eyes which would have required long years to efface its recollection. The carts which he had seen, and the materials they contained, had been by this time erected into a scaffold; and in the front thereof, turned towards the Rue St. Antoine, which, as well as the square itself, was filled with an immense multitude of people, was a block, with the axe leaning against the side.

At one corner of the scaffold was erected a gibbet, and in the front, within a foot or two of the block, stood the unfortunate Chevalier de Rohan, with a priest on one side of him, pouring consolation or instruction into his ear, while the executioner, on the other side, was busily cutting off his hair to prepare his neck for the stroke. Two or three other prisoners were behind, with several priests and the assistants of the executioner, and among them again was seen the form of the old man, Vandenenden, and of the lady whom the count had beheld pass through the court of the castle.

The old man seemed scarcely able to support himself, and was upheld near the foot of the gallows by two of the guards; but the lady, with her head uncovered and her fine hair gathered together in a knot near the top of her head, stood alone, calm, and, to all appearance, perfectly self-possessed; and as she turned, for a moment, to look at the weak old man, whose writhing agitation at parting with a life that he could not expect to prolong for many years, even if pardoned, was truly lamentable, she showed the Count de Morseiul a fine though somewhat faded countenance, with every line expressive of perfect resolution and tranquillity.

The Count de Morseiul was a brave man, who had confronted death a thousand times, who had seen it in many an awful shape, and accompanied by many a terrible accessory; but when he looked at the upturned faces of the multitude, the block, the axe, the gibbet, the executioners, the cold gray sky above that spoke of hopelessness, the thronged windows all around teeming with gaping faces, and all the horrible parade of public execution, he could not but wonder at the self-possession

and the calmness of that lady's look and demeanour, as one about to suffer in that awful scene.

His, however, was no heart that could delight in such spectacles, and, withdrawing almost immediately from the window, he waited in deep thought. In about a minute after there was a sort of low murmur, followed by a heavy stroke; and then the murmur sounded like the rushing of a distant wind. In a few moments after that again came another blow, and the count thought that there was a suppressed scream, mingled with the wavelike sound of the multitude. Again came that harsh blow, accompanied by a similar noise; and, lastly, a loud shout, in which were mingled tones of ferocity and derision, very different from any which had been heard before. Not aware of what could have produced the change, the count was once more irresistibly led to the window, where he beheld swinging and writhing on the gibbet, the form of the old man, Vandenenden, whose pusillanimity seemed to have excited the contempt and indignation of the populace. On the other parts of the scaffold the executioner and his assistants were seen gathering up the bloody ruins of the human temples they had overthrown. Sickened and pained, the count turned away, and covered his eyes with his hands, asking himself in the low voice of thought, "When will this be my fate also?"

CHAPTER X.

THE WOMAN'S JUDGMENT.

We must now, for a little, change the scene entirely; and, as we find often done most naturally, both in reality and poetry, bring the prison and the palace side by side. It was in one of the smaller chambers, then, of the palace at Versailles—exquisitely fitted up with furniture of the most costly, if not of the most splendid materials, with very great taste shown in everything, grace in all the ornaments, harmony in all the colours, and a certain degree of justness and appropriateness in every object around—that there sat a lady, late on the

evening of an autumnal day, busily reading from a book, illustrated with some of the richest and most beautiful miniatures that the artists of the French capital could then produce.

She was, at the time we speak of, somewhat past the middle age; that is to say, she was nearly approaching to the age of fifty, but she looked considerably younger than she really was, and forty was the extreme at which any one by the mere look would have ventured to place the number of her years. The rich worked candelabra of gold under which she was reading cast its light upon not a single gray hair. The form was full and rounded; the arms white and delicate; the hand, which in general loses its symmetry sooner than aught else, except, perhaps, the lips, was as tapering, as soft, and as beautiful in contour as ever. The eyes were large and expressive, and there was a thoughtfulness about the whole countenance which had nothing of melancholy in its character, perhaps a little of worldliness, but more of mind and intellect than either.

After she had been reading for some time, the door was quietly opened, and the king himself entered with a soft and almost noiseless step. The lady immediately laid down her book and rose, but the king took her by the hand, led her back to her chair, and seated himself beside her.

"Still busy reading," he said.

"I am anxious to do so, your majesty," she answered, "at every moment that I can possibly command. In the sort of life which I am destined to lead, and in your majesty's splendid court, temptations to forget what is right, and to think of nothing but pleasures and enjoyments, are so manifold, that one has need to have recourse to such calmer counsellors as these," and she laid her hand upon the book, "counsellors who are not disturbed by such seductions, and whose words have with them a portion of the tranquillity of the dead."

The words were of a soberer character than Louis had been accustomed to hear from the lips of a woman during the greater part of his life, but still they did not displease him, and he replied only by saying,

"But we must have a few more living counsels at present, madam, for the fate of Louis—"

"Which is the fate of France," she said, in so low a voice that it could scarcely be termed an interruption.

"For the fate of Louis and of his domestic happiness—a word, alas! which is so little known to kings—is even now in the balance. Madame," he continued, taking that fair hand in his, "Madame, it is scarcely necessary at this hour to tell you that I love you; it is scarcely necessary to speak what are the wishes and the hopes of the king; scarcely necessary to say what would be his conduct were not motives, strong and almost overpowering, opposed to all that he most desires."

Madame de Maintenon, for she it was, had risen from her seat; had withdrawn her hand from that of the king, and for a moment pressed both her hands tightly upon her heart, while her countenance, which had become as pale as death, spoke that the emotion which she felt was real.

"Cease, sire, oh, cease," she exclaimed, "if you would not have me drop at your feet! Indeed," she continued more vehemently, "that is my proper place," and she cast herself at once upon her knees before the king, taking the hand from which she had just disengaged her own, to bend her lips over it with a look of reverence and affection.

"Hear me, sire, hear me," she said, as the king endeavoured to raise her, "hear me even as I am; for notwithstanding the deep and sincere love and veneration which are in my heart, I must yet offend in one person the monarch whom every voice in Europe proclaims the greatest in the earth; the man whom my own heart tells me is the most worthy to be loved. There is one, however, sire, who must be loved and venerated first, and beyond all—I mean the Almighty; and from his law and from his commands nothing on earth shall ever induce me to swerve. Now, for more than a year, such has been my constant reply to your majesty on these occasions. I have besought you, I have entreated you never to speak on such subjects again, unless that were possible which I know to be impossible."

"Nay," replied the monarch, interrupting her, and raising her with a little gentle force, "nay, nothing is impossible but for me to see you kneeling there."

"Oh yes, indeed, indeed it is, your majesty!" she said; "I have long known it, I have long been sure of it. You once condescended to dream of it yourself; you mentioned it to me, and I for a single instant was deceived by hope; but, as soon as I came to examine

it, I became convinced, fully convinced, that such a thing was utterly and entirely impossible; that your majesty should descend from your high station, and that you should oppose and overrule the advice and opinion of courtiers and ministers, who, though perhaps a little touched with jealousy, can easily find sound and rational reasons enough to oppose your will in this instance. Oh, no, no, sire, I know it is impossible; for Heaven's sake do not agitate me by a dream of happiness that can never be realized!"

"So little is it impossible, dear friend," replied the king, "that it is scarcely half an hour ago since I spoke with Louvois upon the subject."

"And what did he say?" exclaimed Madame de Maintenon, with an eagerness that she could not master. "He opposed it, of course—and, doubtless, wisely. But oh, sire, you must grant me a favour: the last of many, but still a very great one. You must let me retire from your court, from this place of cruel and terrible temptation, where they look upon me from the favour which your majesty has been pleased to show me, in a light which I dare not name. No, sire, no, I will never have it said that I lived on at your court knowing that I bore the name of your concubine. However false, the imputation is too terrible to be undergone; I, who have ever raised my voice against such acts, I, who have risked offending your majesty by remonstrances and exhortations. No, sire, no! I cannot, indeed I cannot, undergo it any longer. It is terrible to me, it is injurious to your majesty, who has so nobly triumphed over yourself in another instance. It matters not what Monsieur de Louvois has said, though I trust he said nothing on earth to lead you to believe that I am capable of yielding to unlawful love."

"Oh no," replied the king, "his opposition was but to the marriage, and that, as usual, was rude, gross, and insulting to his king. I wonder that I have patience with him. But it will some day soon give way."

"I hope and trust, sire," cried Madame de Maintenon, clasping her hands earnestly, "I hope and trust that your majesty has not suffered insult on my account. Then, indeed, it were high time that I should go."

"No," replied Louis, "not absolute insult. Louvois means but to act well. He said everything in opposition, I acknowledge, coarsely and rudely, and in the

end he cast himself upon his knees before me, unsheathed his sword, and, offering the hilt, besought me to take his life rather than to do what I contemplated."

"He did!" cried Madame de Maintenon, with a bright red spot in either cheek. "He did! The famous minister of Louis XIV. has been studying at the theatre lately, I know! But still, sire, though doubtless he was right in some part of his view, Françoise d'Aubigné is not quite so lowly as to be an object of scorn to the son of Michael le Tellier, whose ancestors, I believe, sold drugs at Rheims, while my grandfather supported the throne of yours with his sword, his blood, and his wisdom. He might have spared his scorn, methinks, and saved his wit for argument. But I must not speak so freely in my own cause, for that it is my own I acknowledge," and she wiped away some tears from her fine eyes. "It is my own, for when I beseech your majesty to let me leave you, I tear my own heart, I trample upon all my own feelings. But oh, believe me, sire," she continued, ardently, "believe me when I say that I would rather that heart were broken, as it soon will be, than that your majesty should do anything derogatory to your crown and dignity, or, I must add, than I would do myself anything in violation of the precepts of virtue and religion."

She wept a good deal, but she wept gracefully, and hers was one of those faces which looked none the worse for tears. The king gently drew her to her seat, for she had still been standing, saying, "Nay, nay, be comforted. You have yet the king. You think not really then," he said, "really and sincerely you think not, that there is any true degradation in a monarch wedding a subject? I ask you yourself, I ask you to speak candidly!"

"Nay, sire," cried Madame de Maintenon, "how can you ask me, deeply interested as I am; how can you ask any woman? For we all feel alike in such things, and differently from you men. There is not one woman, proud or humble, in your majesty's court, that would not give you the same answer if she spoke sincerely."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the king; "then we men must be certainly in the wrong. But what think you," he continued, "what think you, as a proof—what would you fair girl Clémence de Marly say were we to ask

her? I saw her but now, as I passed, reading with the dauphine in somewhat melancholy guise."

"Well may she be melancholy, sire!" replied the lady, somewhat sadly, "when the king hears not her prayers. But methinks it would be hardly fair to make her a judge."

"Why, why?" demanded Louis, quickly; "because she is so proud and haughty? Remember, you said the proudest in our court."

"So I say still, sire," replied Madame de Maintenon, in a gentle tone; "but I do not think her proud. She would be too favourable a judge; that was my sole objection. Her own station in the court is doubtful; and besides, sire, you could not think of submitting that on which none—no, not the wisest minister you have—can judge so well as yourself to the decision of a girl."

"Fear not," replied the king; "I will but take her voice on the matter, without her knowing aught of that on which her opinion is called for. I would fain hear what a young and unpractised tongue would say. Let her be called in."

Madame de Maintenon hesitated for a moment. The risk seemed great; the object of long years was at stake; and her own fate and that of France might depend upon the words of a wild, proud girl. But she saw no means of avoiding the trial, and she rang the bell: even in the very act of doing so, remembering many a trait of Clémence, both in childhood and youth, which gave her some assurance. A page appeared instantly, and was despatched to the apartments of the dauphine to call Mademoiselle de Marly to the presence of the king.

The feet of Clémence bore her thither like light, though her heart beat wildly with fear and agitation; and the hue of her cheek, once so bright and glowing, was now as pale as death. She was glad, however, to find the king and Madame de Maintenon alone, for she had succeeded in interesting the latter in the fate of the Count de Morseiul, and she doubted not that she would exert herself, as much as she dared to do for any one, to persuade the king to deal with him gently. So many long and weary days had passed, however, but with little progress, that she had wellnigh sunk into despair, when the summons of this night made her suppose that

her fate and that of her lover was upon the eve of being decided.

The page who conducted her closed the door as soon as she had entered, and Clémence stood before the king with feelings of awe and agitation, such as in former days she knew not that she could feel towards the greatest potentate on earth: but Clémence de Marly loved, and her whole feelings had been changed.

Not a little was her surprise, however, when the king addressed her in a tone half playful, half serious,

"Come hither, spoiled beauty," he said, "come hither, and sit down upon that stool; or, in truth, I should give you up this chair, for you are going to act a part that you never performed before—that of judge, and in a matter of taste, too."

Clémence put her hand to her brow, as if to clear away the thoughts with which she had come thither. But, after gazing in the king's face for a moment with a bewildered look, she recovered herself and replied,

"Indeed, sire, I am, of all people, the most unfit; but I will do my best to please your majesty. What may be the question?"

"Why," answered the king, smiling at her evident surprise and embarrassment, the real cause of which he had quite forgotten in his own thoughts and feelings, "why, the matter is this: a new play has been submitted to us for approval by one of our best poets. It turns upon an ancient king becoming in love with one of his own subjects, and marrying her, while his ministers wish him to marry a neighbouring queen. The question of the policy, however, is not the thing We have settled all that, but the point in dispute between me and this fair lady is whether the poet would have done better to have made the heroine turn out, after all, to be some princess unknown. I say not; but our sweet friend, whose opinion, perhaps, is better than my own, contends that it would have been better, in order to preserve the king's dignity."

Madame de Maintenon panted for breath, and grasped the book that lay on the table to prevent herself from betraying her agitation; but she dared not say a word, nor even look up.

She was almost instantly relieved, however, for Clémence exclaimed, almost before the king had done speaking, "Oh, no! oh, no! Dear lady, you are wrong,

believe me. Kings lose their dignity only by evil acts; they rise in transcendent majesty when they tread upon base prejudices. I know nothing of the policy; you tell me that is apart; and the only question is whether she was worthy that he chose. Was she, sire? was she noble and good?"

"Most noble and most excellent!" said the king.

"Was she religious, wise, well educated?" continued Clémence, eagerly.

"She was all!" answered Louis, "all in a most eminent degree."

"Was she in knowledge, demeanour, character, worthy of his love and of himself?" asked the enthusiastic girl, with her whole face glowing.

"In demeanour not inferior, in character equal, in knowledge superior; in all respects worthy!" replied the monarch, catching her enthusiasm.

But he was stopped by the agitated sobs of Madame de Maintenon, who, sinking from her chair at his feet, clasped his knees, exclaiming, "Spare me, sire! Spare me, or I shall die!"

The king gazed at her tenderly for a moment, then bent down his head, kissed her cheek, and, whispering a few brief words, placed her in the chair where he himself had been sitting. He then turned to Clémence de Marly, who stood by, astonished at the agitation that her words had produced, and fearful that the consequences might be the destruction of all her own hopes.

The countenance of Louis, as he turned towards her, somewhat reassured her; but still she could not help exclaiming, with no slight anxiety, "I hope, sire, I have not offended. I fear I have done so unintentionally."

"If you have," said the king, smiling upon her graciously, "we will find a punishment for you; and as we have made you act as a judge where you little perhaps expected it, we will now make you a witness of things that you expected still less, but which your lips must never divulge till you are authorized to do so. Go as fast as possible to my oratory close by the little cabinet of audience; there you will find good Monsieur la Chaise: direct him to ring the bell, and—after having told Bontems to summon Monsieur de Montchevreuil and the archbishop, who is still here, I think—to come hither himself as speedily as possible. You will accompany him."

What were the king's intentions Clémence de Marly scarcely could divine; but seeing that her words had evidently given happiness both to the king and to Madame de Maintenon, and judging from that fact that her own best hopes for the deliverance of him she loved might be on the eve of accomplishment, she flew rather than ran to obey the king's directions. She found the king's confesser, La Chaise, waiting evidently for the return of the king with some impatience. The message which she brought him seemed to excite his astonishment greatly; but, after pausing for a moment to consider what kind of event that message might indicate, the old man clasped his hands, exclaiming, "This is God's work, the king's salvation is now secure."

He then did as he had been directed, rang the bell for Bontems, gave the order as he had received it, and hurried after Clémence along the corridor of the palace. At the door of Madame de Maintenon's apartment the young lady paused, for there were voices speaking eagerly within, and she feared to intrude upon the monarch. His commands to return, however, had been distinct, and she consequently opened the door and entered. Madame de Maintenon was standing by the table with her eyes bent down, and her colour much heightened. The king was also standing, and, with a slight frown upon his countenance, was regarding a person who had been added to the party since Clémence had left it. This was no other than the minister Louvois, whose coarse, harsh features seemed filled with sullen mortification, which even the presence of the king could scarcely restrain from breaking forth in angry words. His eyes were bent down, not in humility, but in stubbornness; his shoulders a little raised, and he was muttering rather than speaking when Clémence entered. The only words, however, that were audible were, "Your majesty's will must be a law to yourself as well as to your people. I have ventured in all sincerity to express my opinion, and have nothing more to say."

The opening of the door caused Madame de Maintenon to raise her eyes, and when she saw Clémence and the confessor a glad and relieved smile played over her countenance, which was greatly increased by the words which the confessor addressed to the king immediately on his entrance.

"Sire," said he, without waiting for Louis to speak,

"from what I have heard and from what I see, I believe —nay, I am sure, that your majesty is about to take a step which will, more than any that I know of, tend to ensure your eternal salvation. Am I not right?" and he extended his hand towards Madame de Maintenon, as if that gesture were quite sufficient to indicate his full meaning.

"You are, my good father," replied the king; "and I am happy to find that so wise and so good a man as yourself approves of what I am doing. Monsieur Louvois here still seems discontented, though I have conceded so much to his views of policy as to promise that this marriage shall remain for ever private."

"What are views of policy," cried Père la Chaise, "to your majesty's eternal salvation? There are greater, there are higher considerations than worldly policy, sire; but, even were worldly policy all, I should differ with Monsieur Louvois, and say that you were acting as wisely in the things of this world as in reference to another."

"God knows and this lady knows," said Louvois, "that my only opposition proceeds from views of policy. For herself, personally," he added, feeling that he might have offended one who was more powerful than even himself, "for herself, personally, she well knows that I have the most deep and profound respect; and, since it is to be, I trust that his majesty will allow me to be one of the witnesses."

"Assuredly," replied the king. "I had so determined in my own mind, Monsieur de Louvois; and as we need not have more than three, we will dispense with this young lady's presence. Oh, here comes the archbishop and Montchevreuil; my good father La Chaise, let me beg you to prepare an altar, even here. I have determined that all doubt and discussion upon this subject shall be over to-night. Explain, I beg you, to Monsieur de Harlay, what are my views and intentions. One word, belle Clémence," he added, advancing to Clémence, and speaking to her with a gracious smile; "we shall not need your presence, fair lady, but you shall not want the bridemaid's presents. Come hither to-morrow half an hour before I go to the council; and, as you have judged well and wisely in this cause to-night, we will endeavour to judge leniently on any cause that you may bring before us to-morrow."

Although the king spoke low, his words did not escape the keen ear of Louvois; and when Clémence raised her eyes to reply, they met those of the minister gazing upon her with a look of fiendlike anger, which seemed to imply, "You have triumphed over me for the time, and have thwarted me in a matter of deep moment. You think at the same time you have gained your own private end, but I will disappoint you."

Such, at least, was the interpretation that Clémence put upon that angry glance. For an instant it made her heart sink; but, recollecting her former courage, the next instant she replied boldly to the king, "My trust is always in your majesty alone. I have ever had that trust; and what I have seen to-night would show me clearly, that, let us expect what we may of your majesty's magnanimity and generosity, no disappointment will await us."

Thus saying she retired; and what farther passed in the chamber that she quitted—though it affected the destinies of Louis, and of France, and of Europe, more than any event which had taken place for years—remains in the records of history among those things which are known though not proved, and are never doubted, even though no evidence of their reality exists.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ESCAPE.

The hope delayed, which maketh the heart sick, had its wearing effect upon the Count de Morseiul. His countenance showed it in every line; the florid hue of strong health was beginning to pass away; and one morning, in taking his usual walk up and down the court of the Bastile in company with the bluff old English officer we have mentioned, his companion, after gazing in his face for a moment, as if something therein had suddenly struck him, said, "You look ill, young gentleman; what is the matter?"

"How is it possible that I can be otherwise," said the Count, "confined as I am here, and lingering on from

day to day without any knowledge of what is passing regarding myself, or of the fate of friends that I love, or of the condition of all those in whose happiness I am interested?"

"Poo! you must bear things more lightly," answered the old soldier. "Why here you, a youth, a mere boy, have plenty of time before you to spare a year or two for imprisonment. Think of what a difference there is between you and me: here am I without a day too much to spare in life; while to you neither months nor years are anything. As to your friends without, too, trouble not your brain about them. The world would go on just as well without you and I if we were put out of it to-morrow; friends would find new friends, sweethearts gain new lovers, servants betake them to new masters, and the roses would grow, and the birds would sing, and love, and war, and policy, and the wind of heaven, would have their course as if nothing had happened. There might be a few drops in some eyes, which would fall like a spring shower, and be dried up again as soon. However," he added, seeing that his philosophy was not very much to the taste of the young count, "you must live in the world as long as I have done ere you can take such hard lessons home; and if it be but communication with your friends without that you want, I should think that might be obtained easily."

"I see not how that is to be done," replied the count. "If they had allowed me to have my valet here there would have been no difficulty, for I do not think that even stone walls would keep in his wit."

"Oh, we can do without him, I dare say," replied the old man. "If you write me down a note containing few words and no treason, doubtless I can find means, perhaps this very day, of sending it forth to any one that you will. In my apartment we shall find paper, which I got not long ago; some sort of ink we will easily manufacture for ourselves. So, come: that will revive hope a little for you; and though I cannot promise you an answer, yet perhaps one may be obtained too. There are old friends of mine that sometimes will drop in to see me; and what I propose to do is to give your note to one of the prisoners I have spoken with, who expects to be liberated to-day or to-morrow, and direct the answer to be sent by some one who is likely to come to see me."

The young count gladly availed himself of this proposal; and the means of writing having, by one prison resource or another, been obtained, he wrote a few brief words, detailing the anxiety and pain he suffered, and begging some immediate information as to the probability of his obtaining his freedom, and regarding the situation of those that he loved best. He couched his meaning in language as vague as possible, and addressed the note to his valet, Jerome Riquet, fearing to write to Clémence, lest he should by any means draw suspicion and consequent evil upon her. The old English officer undertook to give all the necessary directions for its delivery, and when they met again in the evening, he assured him that the note was gone.

At an early hour on the following morning the Englishman was called away from him to speak with some one admitted by an order from the minister; and in about ten minutes after he joined the count, and slipped a small piece of folded paper into his hand, saying, in a low voice, "Do not look at it now, or leave me immediately, for there are several of these turnkeys about, and we must not create suspicion." After a few more turns, however, the old man said, "Now, Monsieur de Morseiul," and the count hastening to his chamber, opened the note, which was in the handwriting of Riquet.

"I have been obliged," it said, "to keep out of the way, and to change my shape a dozen times on account of the business of the exempt; but—from what the count says, and from hearing that Monsieur de Louvois swore last night by all the gods that he worships, that, on account of some offence just given, he will bring the count's head to the block within a week, as he did that of Monsieur de Rohan—a bold stroke will be struck today. The count will be set at liberty about two o'clock, and the moment he is at liberty he must neither go to king nor ministers, nor to his own house either in Paris or at Versailles, but to the little inn called the Golden Cock, in the Rue du Faubourg St. Antoine, call himself Monsieur du Sac, and ask for the horse his servant brought. Having got it, let him ride on for Poitou as fast as he can go. He will meet friends by the way."

This was all that the note contained, and what the bold stroke was that Riquet alluded to the count could not divine. He judged, indeed, that perhaps it was quite

as well he should be ignorant of the facts; and after having impressed all the directions contained in the note upon his mind, he destroyed the paper, and was preparing to go down again into the court.

It so happened, however, that he paused for a moment, and took up one of the books which he was still reading, when an officer, who was called the Major of the Bastile, entered the room, and summoned him to the presence of the governor. The count immediately followed, and passing through the gate into the Court of Government, he found Besmaux waiting in the corps de garde, with a blithe and smiling countenance.

"Good-morning, Monsieur de Morseiul," he said; "I have got some good news for you, which perhaps you do not expect."

He fixed his eyes scrutinizingly upon the count's face, but all was calm. "Here is an order for your liberation," he continued, "which, doubtless, you will be glad to hear."

"Most glad," exclaimed the count; "for, to say the truth, I am growing both sick and weary of this imprisonment, especially as I know that I have done nothing to deserve it."

"That is better than being imprisoned knowing you have done something to deserve it," said Besmaux. "However, here is the order; and though it is not exactly in accurate form, I must obey, I suppose, and set you at liberty, for here is the king's handwriting in every line."

"That you must judge of yourself, Monsieur de Besmaux," replied the count. "But I hope, of course, that you will not detain me any longer than is necessary."

"No, no," said Besmaux; "I must obey the order, for it is in the king's hand distinctly. Here are all the things that were upon your person, Monsieur de Morseiul. Be so good as to break the seal yourself, examine them, and give me an acknowledgment, as is usual here, that they have been returned to you. There is the ordinary form; you have nothing to do but to sign it."

The count did as he was required to do, and the governor then restored to him his sword, saying, "There is your sword, Monsieur le Comte. It is customary to give some little acknowledgment to the turnkeys if you think fit; and now, Monsieur le Comte, you are free. Will you do me the houour of supping with me again to-night?"

"I fear not to-night, Monsieur de Besmaux; some other time I will have that pleasure. But, of course, after this unexpected and sudden enlargement, there is much to be done."

"Of course," replied the governor; "you will have to thank the king, and Monsieur de Louvois, and all that. Some other time, then, be it. It is strange they have sent no carriage or horse for you. Perhaps you would like to wait till they arrive?"

"Oh, no," replied the count. "Freedom before everything, Monsieur de Besmaux. By your permission I will send for the apparel I have left in my chamber. But now, to set my foot beyond the drawbridge is my great ambition."

"We will conduct you so far," replied Besmaux, and led the way towards the gate. The drawbridge was lowered, the gates opened, and the count, distributing the greater part of the money which had been restored to him among the turnkeys, turned and took leave of the governor, and issued forth from the Bastile. He remarked, however, that Besmaux, with the major of the prison and two or three others, remained upon the bridge as if they felt some suspicion, and were watching his farther proceedings. He accordingly rendered his pace somewhat slow, and turned towards his own hotel in Paris, while two or three boys, who hung about the gates of the Bastile, followed, importunately looking up in his face. He passed along two streets before he could get rid of them; but then, suddenly turning up one of the narrow lanes of the city, he made the best of his way to the little inn, or, rather, public house, which Jerome Riquet had pointed out to him in his letter, where a bright golden cock, somewhat larger than life, stood out into the street from a pole thrust into the front of the house. Before he turned in he looked down the street towards the Bastile, but saw no cause for suspicion, and entered the narrow entrance. As was not uncommon in such houses at that time, no door on either hand gave admission to the rooms of the inn till the visiter had threaded half way through the small ill-lighted passage. At length, however, doors appeared, and the sound of a footstep instantly called out a stout, jovial-looking personage, with a considerable nose and abundance of cheek and stomach, who, without saying anything, merely planted himself directly in the count's way.

"Are you the landlord?" demanded the count.

"Yes, sir," replied the cabaretier, much more laconically than might have been expected from his appearance. "Who are you?"

"I am Monsieur du Sac," replied the count.

"Oh, oh!" cried the host, laying his forefinger on the side of his face. "If you are Monsieur du Sac, your horse will be ready in a crack. But you had better come into the stable; there are people drinking in the hall."

The count followed him without saying any more, and found three horses standing ready saddled, and wanting only the girths tightened and the bridles in their mouths. The centre one he instantly recognised as one of his own finest horses, famous for its great strength and courage. The other two were powerful animals, but of a different breed; and the count was somewhat surprised when the landlord ordered a stable boy, who was found waiting, to make haste and girth them all up. The boy began with the farther horse; but the landlord then exclaimed, "No, no, the gentleman's first, the others will do after;" and in a moment the count's horse was ready to set out.

"Better go by the back gate, sir," said the host; "then, if you follow round by the gardens of the convent of St. Mary, up the little lane to the left, you will come into the road again, where all is clear. Where's the bottle, boy, I told you to have ready? Monsieur du Sac will want a draught before he goes." A large bottle was instantly produced from a nook in the stable, and a tumblerful of excellent wine poured out. The count took it and drank, for excitement had made him thirsty, and he might well want that support, which the juice of the grape or any other thing could afford, when he reflected that the die was now cast; that he had been liberated from prison, as he could not doubt, by some counterfeit order; and that he was flying from the court of France, certainly never to return, unless it were as a captive, brought back probably to death.

The blow being struck, however, he was not a man to feel regret or hesitation; and there was something in the sensation of being at liberty, of having cast off the dark load of imprisonment, which was in itself inspiring. He sprang upon his horse, then, with joyful speed, cast the landlord one of the few gold pieces that re-

mained in his purse, and while the boy held open the back gates of the inn court, he rode out once more, free to turn his steps whithersoever he would. That part of the city was not unknown to him; and passing round the gardens, and through the narrow lanes which at that time were intermingled with the Faubourg St. Antoine, he entered the high road again just where the town ended and the country began; and, putting his horse into a quick pace, made the best of his way onward towards Poitou.

As he now went forth he looked not back, and he had gone on for five or six miles, when the belief that he heard the feet of horses following fast made him pause and turn. He was not mistaken in the supposition: There were two horsemen on the road, about five or six hundred yards behind him; but they slackened their pace as soon as he paused; and remembering the words written by Jerome Riquet, that he would find friends upon the road, he thought it better not to inquire into the matter any farther, but make the most of his time, and go on. He thus proceeded without drawing a rein for about five-and-thirty miles, the men who were behind him still keeping him in sight, but never approaching nearer than a certain distance.

The road which he had chosen was that of Orleans, though not the most direct; but, by taking it, he avoided all that part of the country through which he was most likely to be pursued if his flight were speedily discovered. At length, in the neighbourhood of the little town of Angerville, a man appeared on horseback at the turning of one of the roads. He was evidently waiting for some one, and rode up to the count as soon as ever he appeared, saying merely, "Monsieur du Sac."

"The same," replied the count; and the man immediately said, "This way, then, sir."

The count followed without any reply, and the man rode on at a quick pace for the distance of fully three miles farther. The horsemen turned as the count had turned, but the road had become tortuous, and they were soon lost to his sight. At length, however, the high stone walls, overtopped with trees, and partly covered with ivy, which usually surrounded the park of an old French chateau, appeared, and making a circuit round three sides of this enclosure, the count and his guide

came suddenly to the large iron gates, which gave admission to a paved court leading to another set of gates, with a green esplanade and a terrace above; while the whole was crowned by a heavy mass of stonework, referable to no sort of architecture but itself. Round these courts were various small buildings, scarcely fitted indeed for human habitation, but appropriated to gardeners and gatekeepers, and other personages of the kind; and from one of these, as soon as the count appeared, instantly rushed forth Jerome Riquet himself, kissing his master's hand with sincere joy and affection, which was not at all decreased by a consciousness that his liberation had been effected by the skill, genius, and intrigue of the said Jerome Riquet himself.

"Dismount, my lord, in all safety," he said; "we have taken measures to ensure that you should not be traced. Refreshments of every kind are ready for you; and, if you so please, you can take a comfortable night's repose before you go on."

"That were scarcely prudent, Riquet," replied the count; "but I will at all events pause for a time, and you can tell me all that has happened. First, whose dwelling is this?"

"The house of good Monsieur Perault at Angerville," replied the valet. "He has been dead for about two months, and his old maître d'hôtel, being a friend of mine, and still in the family, gave me the keys of the chateau to be your first resting-place."

On entering the chateau, Albert of Morseiul found it completely thronged with his own servants; and the joyful faces that crowded round, some in smiles and some in tears, to see their young lord liberated, was not a little sweet to his heart. Some balm, indeed, was necessary to heal old wounds before new ones were inflicted; and though Riquet moved through the assembled attendants with the conscious dignity of one who had conferred the benefit in which they rejoiced, yet he hastened to lead his young lord on, and to have the room cleared, having much indeed to tell. His tale was painful to the count in many respects; but, being given by snatches, as the various questions of his master elicited one fact after another, we will attempt to put it in more continuous form and somewhat shorter language, taking it up at events which, though long past, were now first explained.

From an accidental reference to the count's journey from Morseiul to Poitiers, Riquet was led to declare the whole facts in regard to the commission which had been given by the king to Pelisson and St. Helie. The insatiable spirit of curiosity by which Maître Jerome was possessed, never let him rest till he had made the unhappy Curé of Gaudrieul declare, by a manœuvre before related, what was in the sheepskin bag he carried; and, as soon as the valet heard that it was a commission from the king, his curiosity was still more strongly excited to ascertain the precise contents. For the purpose of so doing, he attached himself firmly to the curé during the rest of the evening, made him smoke manifold pipes, induced him to eat every promotive of drinking that he could lay his hands upon, plied him with wine, and then, when half besotted, ventured to insinuate a wish to peep into the bag. The cure, however, was firm to his trust even in the midst of drunkenness; he would peep into the bag with curious longings himself, but he would allow no one else to do so, and Riquet had no resource but to finish what he had so well commenced by a bottle of heady Burgundy in addition, which left the poor priest but strength enough to roll away to his chamber, and, conscious that he was burdened with matters which he was incompetent to defend, to lock the door tight behind him before he sunk insensible on his bed. He forgot, however, one thing, which it is as well for every one to remember; namely, that chambers have windows as well as doors; and Jerome Riquet, whose genius for running along house gutters was not less than his other high qualities, found not the slightest difficulty of effecting an entrance, and spending three or four hours in the examination of the sheepskin bag and its contents. With as much skill as if he had been brought up in the French postoffice of that day, he opened the royal packet without even breaking the seals, and only inflicting a very slight and accidental tear on one part of the envelope, which the keen eyes of Pelisson had afterward discovered.

As soon as he saw the nature of the king's commission, Riquet—who was no friend to persecution of any kind, and who well knew that all his master's plans would be frustrated, and the whole province of Poitou thrown into confusion if such a commission were opened on the first assembling of the states—determined to

do away with it altogether, and substitute an old pack of cards which he happened to have in his valise in place of that important document. He then proceeded to examine minutely and accurately the contents of the curé's trunk mail, and, more from a species of jocose malice than anything else, he tore off a piece of the king's commission which could do no harm to any one, and folded it round the old tobacco-box, which he had found wrapped up in a piece of paper very similar among the goods and chattels of the priest.

Besides this adventure, he had various others to detail to the count, with the most important of which, namely, his interview with the king and Louvois at Versailles, the reader is already acquainted. But he went on from that point to relate, that, lingering about in the neighbourhood of the king's apartments, he had heard the order for his master's arrest given to Monsieur de Cantal. He flew home with all speed, but, on arriving at the count's hotel, found that he had already gone to the palace, and that his arrest was certain.

His next question to himself was how he might best serve him under such circumstances; and, habituated from the very infancy of his valethood to travesty himself in all sorts of disguises, he determined instantly on assuming the character of an exempt of one of the courts of law, as affording the greatest probability of answering his purpose. He felt a degree of enjoyment and excitement in every species of trick of the kind which carried him through, when the least timidity or hesitation would have frustrated his whole plans. The fact is, that although it may seem a contradiction in terms, yet Maître Jerome was never so much in his own character as when he was personating somebody else.

The result of his acting on this occasion we already know, as far as the count was concerned; but the moment that he had seen him lodged in the Bastile, the valet, calculating that his frolic might render Versailles a dangerous neighbourhood, retired to the count's hotel in Paris, where a part of his apparel was still to be found, compounded rapidly the sympathetic ink from one of the many receipts stored up in his brain, and then flew with a handkerchief, properly prepared, to Clémence de Marly, whom he found alone with the Chevalier d'Evran. As his master had not made him ac-

quainted with the occasional feelings of jealousy which he had experienced towards that gentleman, Jerome believed he had fallen upon the two persons from whom, out of all the world, his master would be most delighted to hear. The whole facts of the count's arrest then were detailed and discussed, and the words written, which, as we have seen, were received by Albert of Morseiul in prison.

Afraid to go back to Versailles, Riquet hastened away into Poitou, leaving to Clémence de Marly and the Chevalier d'Evran the task of liberating his lord, of which they seemed to entertain considerable hopes. On his return, however, he found, first, that all his fellow-servants having been faithful to him, the investigations regarding the appearance of the exempt had ended in nothing being discovered, except that somebody had profanely personated one of those awful personages; and, secondly, that the count was not only still in durance, but that little if any progress had been made towards effecting his liberation. The Duc de Rouvré, who seemed to be restored to the king's favour, was now a guest at the palace of Versailles: with Clémence de Marly the valet could not obtain an interview, though he daily saw her in company with the Chevalier d'Evran, and the report began to be revived that the king intended to bestow her hand upon that gentleman, who was now in exceedingly high favour with the monarch.

A scheme now took possession of the mind of Riquet, which only suggested itself in utter despair of any other plan succeeding; and as, to use his own expression, the very attempt, if frustrated, would bring his head under the axe, he acknowledged to his lord that he had hesitated and trembled even while he prepared everything for its execution. He went down once more into Poitou; he communicated with all the friends and most favoured vassals of his master; he obtained money and means for carrying every part of his scheme into effect, as soon as his lord should be liberated from the Bastile, and for securing his escape into Poitou, where a choice of plans remained before him, of which we shall have to speak hereafter.

The great point, however, was to enable the count to make his exit from the prison, and it was at this that the heart of Jerome Riquet failed. His was one of those far-seeing genuises that never forget, in any situation,

to obtain, from the circumstances of the present, anything which may be, however remotely, advantageous in the future. Upon this principle he had acted in his conference with the king; and without any definite and immediate object but that of obtaining pardon for himself for past offences, he had induced the monarch, we must remember, to give him a document, of which he now proposed to take advantage. By a chymical process very easily effected, he completely took out the ink in those parts of the document where his own name was written, and then, with slow and minute labour, substituted the name of his master in the place, imitating, even to the slightest stroke, the writing of the king. The date underwent the same change to suit his purpose, so that a complete pardon, in what appeared the undoubted hand of the king himself, was prepared for the Count de Morseiul.

This step having been taken, Riquet contemplated his work with pride, but fear, and the matter remained there for the whole day; but by the next morning he had become habituated to daring; and, resolved to make the document complete, he spent eight hours in forging, underneath, an order, in due form, for the count's liberation; and the most practised eye could have scarcely found any difference between the lines there written and those of the king himself. In all probability, if Riquet could have obtained a scrap of Louvois's writing, he would have added the countersign of the minister; but, as that was not to be had, he again laid the paper by, and was seized with some degree of panic at what he had done.

He had brought up, however, from Poitou, his lord's intendant, and several others of his confidential servants and attendants, promising them, with the utmost conceit and self-confidence, to set the count at liberty. They now pressed him to fulfil his design; and while he hesitated, with some degree of tremour, the note which the old English officer had conveyed to him was put into his hands, and decided him at once. He intrusted the forged order to a person whom he could fully rely upon to deliver it at the gates of the Bastile, stationed his relays upon the road, and prepared everything for his master's escape.

Such was the account which he gave to his young lord as he sat in the chateau of Angerville; and though

he did not exactly express all that he had heard in regard to Clémence de Marly and the Chevalier d'Evran, he told quite enough to renew feelings in the bosom of the count which he had struggled against long and eagerly.

"Who were the men," demanded the count, "that followed me on horseback?"

"Both of them, sir," replied the man, "were persons who would have delayed any pursuit of you at the peril of their own lives. One of them was your own man, Martin, whom you saved from being hanged for a spy, by the night attack you made upon the Prince of Orange's quarters. The other, sir, was poor Paul Virlay, who came up with the intendant of his own accord, with his heart wellnigh broken, and with all the courage of despair about him."

"Poor Paul Virlay!" exclaimed the count; "his heart wellnigh broken! Why, what has happened to him, Jerome? I left him in health and in happiness."

"Ay, sir," replied the man, "but things have changed since then. Two hellish priests—I've a great mind to become a Huguenot myself—got hold of his little girl, and got her to say, or at least swore that she said, she would renounce her father's religion. He was furious; and her mother, who had been ill for some days, grew worse, and took to her bed. The girl said she never had said so; the priests said she had, and brought a witness; and they seized her in her father's own house, and carried her away to a convent. He was out when it happened, and when he came back he found his wife dying and his child gone. The mother died two days after; and Paul, poor fellow, whose brain was quite turned, was away for three days with his large sledge-hammer with him, which nobody but himself could wield. Everybody said that he was gone to seek after the priests, to dash their brains out with the hammer; but they heard of it, and escaped out of the province; and at the end of three days he came back quite calm and cool, but everybody saw that his heart was broken. I saw him at Morseiul, poor fellow, and I have seldom seen so terrible a sight. The mayor, who has turned Catholic, you know, sir, asked him if he had gone after the priests, to which he said 'No;' but every one thinks that he did."

While Riquet was telling this tale the count had placed his hands bejore his eyes, and it was evident that

he trembled violently, moved by terrible and strongly conflicting feelings, the fiery struggle of which might well have such an influence on his corporeal frame. He rose from his seat slowly, however, when the man had done, and walked up and down the room more than once with a stern, heavy step. At length, turning to Riquet again, he demanded,

"And in what state is the province?"

"Why almost in a state of revolt, sir," replied Riquet. "As far as I can hear, there are as many as a couple of thousand men in arms in different places. It is true they are doing no great things; that the intendant of the province, sometimes with the bishop, sometimes with the Abbé St. Helie, marches hither and thither with a large body of troops, and puts down the revolt here, or puts down the revolt there. Till he hears that it has broken out in another place, he remains where it last appeared, quartering his soldiers upon the inhabitants, and, in the order of the day, allowing them *to do everything but kill.* Then he drives the people by thousands at a time to the churches of our religion, makes them take the mass, and breaks a few of them on the wheel when they spit the host out of their mouths. He then writes up to the king that he has made wonderful conversions; but, before his letter can well reach Paris, he is obliged to march to another part of the province, to put down the insurrection there, and to make converts, and break on the wheel as before."

"Say no more, say no more," cried the count. "Oh God! wilt thou suffer this to go on?"

Again he paced the room for several minutes; and then turning suddenly to Riquet, he said, "Riquet, you have shown yourself at once devoted, courageous, and resolute in the highest degree."

"Oh, sir," interrupted the man, "you mistake: I am the most desperate coward that ever breathed."

"No jesting now, Riquet," said the count, in a sorrowful tone; "no jesting now. My spirits are too much crushed, my heart too much torn to suffer me to hear one light word. After all that you have done for me, will you do one act more? Have you the courage to return to Paris this night, and carry a letter for me to Mademoiselle de Marly, and to bring me back her reply?"

"Well, sir, well," said Riquet, rubbing his hands, and

then putting his fore-finger under his collar, and running it round his neck with a significant jesture, "a man can be hanged but once in his life, at least as far as I know of; and, as Cæsar said, 'A brave man is but hanged once, a coward is hanged every day;' therefore, as I see no other object that my father and mother could have in bringing me into the world but that I should be hanged in your service, I will go to Paris, at the risk of accomplishing my destiny, with all my heart."

"Hark you, Riquet," replied the count, "I will give you a means of security. If by any means you should be taken, and likely to be put to death for what you have done, tell those who take you that, upon a distinct promise of pardon to you under the king's own hand, the Count of Morseiul will surrender himself in your place. I will give you that promise under my hand, if you like."

"That is not necessary, sir," replied Riquet. "Everybody in all France knows that you keep your word. But pray write the letter quickly; for, ride as hard as I will, I shall have scarce time to reach Paris before bedtime; and I suppose you would not have the young lady wakened."

There was a degree of cold bitterness in Riquet's manner when he spoke thus of Clémence, which made the Count of Morseiul feel that the man thought he was deceived. But still, after what had passed before, he felt that he was bound to be more upon his guard against himself than against others; and he resolved that he would not be suspicious, that he would drive from his bosom every such feeling, that he would remember the indubitable proofs of affection that she had given him, and that he would act towards her as if her whole conduct had been under his eye, and had been such as he could most approve. The materials for writing were instantly procured; and while Riquet caused a fresh horse to be saddled and prepared for his journey, the count sat down and wrote as follows:

"My beloved Clemence,

"Thank God, I am once more at liberty; but the brightness of that blessing, great as it is under any circumstances, would be nearly all tarnished and lost if I had not the hope that you would share it with me. I am now some way on the road to Poitou, where I hear

that the most horrible and aggravated barbarities are daily being committed upon my fellow Protestants. My conduct there must be determined by circumstances; but I will own that my blood boils at the butchery and persecution I hear of. I remember the dear and cheering promises you have made; I remember the willingness and joyfulness with which those promises were made, and that recollection renders it not madness, renders it not selfishness to say to you, Come to me, my Clémence, come to me as speedily as possible; come and decide for me, when perhaps I may not have calmness to decide for myself! Come, and let us unite our fate for ever, and so far acquire the power of setting the will of the world at defiance. Were it possible, I would trust entirely to your love and your promises, in the hope that you would suffer the bearer of this, most faithful and devoted as he has shown himself to be, to guide you to me; but I fear that the little time he dare stay in Paris would render it impossible for you to make your escape with him. Should this, as I fear, be the case, write to me, if it be but a few lines, to tell me how I can assist or aid you in your escape, and when it can be made. Adieu! Heaven bless and guard you."

Before he had concluded Riquet had again appeared, telling him that he was ready to set out; and taking the somewhat useless precaution to seal his letter, the count gave it into his hands and saw him depart.

It was now about five o'clock in the evening; and as he knew that many a weary and expectant hour must pass before the man could return, the count conferred with all the various attendants who had been collected at Angerville, and found that the account which Riquet had given him of the state of Poitou was confirmed in every respect. Each had some tale of horror or of cruelty. Paul Virlay, however, whom he had asked for more than once, did not appear; and it was discovered, on inquiry, that he had not even remained at Angerville, but, with the cold and sullen sort of despair that had fallen upon him, had ridden on, now that he judged the count was in safety.

After a time the young nobleman, anxious for some repose both of mind and body, cast himself upon a bed, in the hope of obtaining sleep; but it visited not his eyelids; dark, and horrible, and agitating visions peo-

pled the hours of darkness, though slumber had no share in calling them up. At length, full two hours before he had expected that Riquet could return, the sound of a horse's feet coming at a rapid pace struck the count's ear as he lay and listened to the howling of the November wind; and, starting up, he went to the window of the room and gazed out. It was a clear night, with the moon up, though there were some occasional clouds floating quickly over the sky, and he clearly saw that the horseman was Riquet, and alone. Proceeding into the other room where he had left a light, he hastened down to meet him, asking whether he had obtained an answer.

"I have, sir," replied the man, "though I saw not the fair lady herself; yet Maria, the waiting woman, brought it in no long time. There it is;" and, drawing it from his pocket, he gave it into the count's hand. Albert of Morseiul hastened back with the letter, and tore it eagerly open; but what were the words that his eyes saw?

"Cruel and unkind," it began, "and must I not add —alas, must I not add even to the man that I love— ungenerous and ungrateful? What would I not have sacrificed, what would I not have done, rather than this should have occurred, and that the first use you make of your liberty should be to fly to wage actual war against the crown! How shall I dare look up? I, who for weeks have been pleading that no such thought would ever enter into your noble and loyal nature. No, Albert, I cannot follow the messenger you send; or, to use the more true and straightforward word, I *will* not; and never by my presence with you, however much I may still love you, will I countenance the acts to which you are now hurrying."

It was signed "Clémence;" but it fell from the count's hand ere his eye had reached that word, and he gazed at it fixedly as it lay upon the ground for several moments, without attempting to raise it; then turning with a sudden start to Riquet and another servant who stood by, as if for orders, he exclaimed, "To horse!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE PASTOR'S PRISON.

The pillow of Clémence de Marly was wet with her tears, and sleep had not visited her eyes, when a quick knocking was heard at her door, and she demanded timidly who was there.

"It is I, madam," replied the voice of the Duchess de Rouvré's maid.

"Then wait a moment, Mariette," replied Clémence, "and I will open the door." She rose, put on a dressing-gown, and by the light of the lamp, which still stood unextinguished on the table, she raised and concealed, in a small casket, two letters which she had left open, and which bore evident signs of having been wept over before she retired to rest. The one was in the clear, free handwriting of youth and strength; the other was in characters every line of which spoke the feeble hand of age, infirmity, or sickness. When that was done, she opened the door which was locked, and admitted the duchess's maid, who was followed into the room by her own attendant Maria, who usually slept in a little chamber hard by.

"What is the matter, Mariette?" demanded the young lady. "I can scarcely say that I have closed my eyes ere I am again disturbed."

"I am sorry, mademoiselle, to alarm you," replied the woman; "but Maria would positively not wake you, so I was obliged to do it, for the duke was sent for just as he was going to bed, and, after remaining for two hours with the king, has returned, and given immediate orders to prepare for a long journey. The duchess sent me to let you know that such was the case, and that the carriages would be at the door in less than two hours."

"Do you know whither they are going," demanded Clémence, "and if I am to accompany them?"

"I know nothing from the duke or the duchess, mademoiselle," replied the woman; "but the duke's valet said that we were going either to Brittany or Poitou,

for my lord had brought away a packet from the king addressed to somebody in those quarters; and you are going certainly, mademoiselle, for the duchess told me to tell you so, and the valet says that it is on account of you that we are going; for that the chevalier came back with my lord the duke, and, when he parted with him, said, 'Tell Clémence she shall hear from me soon.'"

Clémence mused, but made no answer; and when, in about an hour after, she descended to the saloon of the hotel, she found everything in the confusion of departure, and the Duc de Rouvré standing by the table, at which his wife was seated, waiting for the moment of setting out, with a face wan, indeed, and somewhat anxious, but not so sorrowful or dejected as perhaps Clémence expected to see.

"I fear, my dear duke," she said, approaching him and leaning her two hands affectionately upon his arm, "I fear that you, who have been to your poor Clémence a father indeed, are destined to have even more than a father's share of pains and anxieties with her. I am sure that all this to-night is owing to me, or to those that are dear to me, and that you have fallen under the king's displeasure on account of the rash steps of him whom I cannot yet cease to love."

"Not at all, my sweet Clémence; not at all, my sweet child," said the old nobleman, kissing her hand with that mingled air of gallant respect and affection which he always showed towards her. "I do not mean to say that your fair self has nothing to do with this business in any way, but certainly not in that way. It is about another business altogether, Clémence, that we are ordered to retire from the court; but not in disgrace, my dear young friend, we are by no means in disgrace. The king is perfectly satisfied that you have had no share in all the business of poor Albert of Morseiul; and when I told him how bitterly and deeply grieved you were, and how struck to the heart you seemed to have been when you heard that the count had fled to join the rebels at Poitou, he told me to bid you console yourself, saying that he would find you another and a better husband soon."

Clémence's eyes were bent down upon the ground with an expression of grief and pain; but she looked up in a moment, and said, "Is it permitted me to ask you, my lord, how I am connected with this sudden removal?"

"Nay," he said, "nay, my sweet Clémence, that I must not tell you. I scruple not to say that I think his majesty is acting without due consideration; but, of course, my first duty, like that of all his other subjects, is to obey; and he particularly wishes that nothing should be said to you on the subject, as it might render one duty difficult by opposing to it another. At present, the whole matter is quite simple; we have nothing to do but to set out as soon as these villanous lackeys have got the carriages ready."

Thus saying, the duke turned away, evidently wishing to avoid further inquiries, and in about half an hour after Clémence was rolling away from Versailles with the Duke and Duchess de Rouvré, followed by a long train of carriages and attendants.

It is needless to trace a melancholy journey in the darkest and gloomiest weather of the month of November; but it was evident that the Duc de Rouvré was in haste, travelling early and late; and it also appeared, from his conversation as they went, that, though he was charged with no special mission from the king, he proposed only pausing for a short time in Poitou, and then bending his steps to some of his other estates. Indeed, he suffered it to be understood that, in all probability, for many months he should take but little repose, frequently changing his place of abode, and travelling from one city to another. Although the health of Madame de Rouvré was by no means vigorous, and though far and rapid travelling never at any time had agreed with her, she made no objection, but seemed contented and happy with the arrangement, and even suggested that a journey to Italy might be beneficial to them all.

Clémence wondered, but was silent; and at length, late on the afternoon of the sixth day after their departure, they arrived at the small town of Thouars, over which was brooding the dark gray fogs of a November evening. Not many miles remained to travel from Thouars to Ruffigny; and the duke, who was, of course, well known in that part of the country, received visits of congratulation on his arrival from the principal officers and inhabitants of the town. At these visits, however, Clémence was not present. She sent down an excuse for not appearing during the evening; and when the duke sent up to say he wished to see her for a moment, she was not to be found, nor had she, indeed, returned at the end of an hour.

Where was Clémence de Marly? it may be asked. She was in the dark and gloomy abode, often of crime and often of innocence, but ever of anguish and of sorrow. She was in the prison of the old chateau of Thouars. Not, indeed, as one of those unfortunate beings, the involuntary inmates of the place, but as one coming upon the sad and solemn errand of visiting a dear and well-beloved friend for the last time. The office of governor of the prison, as it was seldom, if ever, used for the confinement of state offenders, had been suffered to fall into the hands of the mayor of the place, who delegated his charge to an old lieutenant, who again intrusted it to two subordinate jailers, antique and rusty in their office as the keys they carried. It was with one of these that Clémence was speaking eagerly in the small dark passage that led into the interior of the building. She was habited in the ordinary gray cloak in which we have seen her twice before, and had with her still, on this occasion also, the faithful servant who had then attended her.

"Come, come, pretty mistress," said the man, thrusting himself steadfastly in the way, "I tell you it is as much as my head is worth. He is condemned to be broken on the wheel to-morrow, and I dare admit nobody to him."

"Look at these," said Clémence, pouring some gold pieces from her purse into her open hand. "I offer you these if you will allow me to speak with him for an hour; and, if you refuse, I shall certainly insist upon seeing the lieutenant of the governor himself. You know what manner of man he is, and whether he will reject what I shall offer him; so he will get the money, and you will not, and I shall see the prisoner notwithstanding."

The man's resolution was evidently shaken to the foundation. He was an old man and fond of gold. The sight was pleasant to him, and putting forth his hand, he lifted one piece between his finger and thumb, turned it over, and dropped it back again upon the others. The sound completed what the touch had begun.

"Well," he said at length, "I do not see why he should get it and I not. He is asleep, too, now in the arm-chair; so it were a pity to wake him. You want to be with the old man an hour, do you, young woman? Well, you must both go in then; and I must go away and be absent with the keys, for fear the lieutenant should wake and go to see the prisoner."

"Do you mean to lock us in with him, then?" exclaimed the maid, in some terror.

"Fear not, Maria!" said her mistress. "You, who have ever given me encouragement and support, must not fear now. There is God even here."

"Be quick, then, and come along," said the jailer, "but first give me the money." Clémence poured it into his hand; and when he had got it, he paused, hesitating as if he were tempted by the spirit of evil to keep the gold and refuse her admission. But, if such were the case, a moment's reflection showed him that to attempt it would be ruinous; and he therefore led the way along the passage in which they were, putting his finger upon his lips to enjoin silence as they passed by a part of the prison which seemed to be inhabited by those who had some means of obtaining luxuries. At length, however, he lowered a lantern which he carried, and pointed to two or three steps which led into another passage, narrower, damper, and colder than the former. At the distance of about fifty feet from the steps this corridor was crossed by another; and turning to the right over a rough, uneven flooring of earth, with the faint light of the lantern gleaming here and there on the damp green glistening mould of the walls, he walked on till he reached the end, and then opened a low, heavy door.

All within was dark; and as the man drew back to let his female companions pass, the attendant, Maria, laid her hand upon the lantern, saying, "Give us a light, at least!"

"Ah! well, you may have it," grumbled forth the jailer; and Clémence, who, though resolute to her purpose, still felt the natural fears of her sex and her situation, turned to him, saying, "I give you three more of those pieces when you open the door again for me."

"Oh, I'll do that, I'll do that!" replied the man, quickened by the gold; and while Maria took the lantern and passed the door, Clémence gazed down the step or two that led into the dungeon, and then, with a pale cheek and wrung heart, followed. The door closed behind them; the harsh bolt of the lock grated as the man turned the key; and the power of retreat being at an end, the beautiful girl threw back the hood of the cloak, and gazed on before her into the obscure vault, which the feeble light of the lantern had scarcely deprived of

any part of its darkness. The only thing that she could perceive, at first, was a large heavy pillar in the midst, supporting the pointed vault of the dungeon, with the faint outline of a low wooden bed, with the head thereof resting against the column.

No one spoke, and nothing but a faint moan broke the awful silence. It required the pause of a moment or two ere Clémence could overcome the feelings of her own heart sufficiently to take the lantern and advance; opening a part of the dim horn as she did so, in order to give greater light. A step or two farther forward brought her to the side of the bed; and the light of the lantern now showed her distinctly the venerable form of Claude de l'Estang stretched out upon the straw with which the pallet was filled. A heavy chain was round his middle, and the farther end thereof was fastened to a stanchion in the column.

The minister was dressed in a loose gray prison-gown; and although he saw the approach of some one in the abode of misery in which he was placed, he moved not at all, but remained with his arm bent under his head, his eyes turned slightly towards the door, his lower lip dropping as if with debility or pain, and his whole attitude displaying the utter lassitude and apathy of exhaustion and despair. When Clémence was within a foot or two of his side, however, he slowly raised his eyes towards her; and in a moment, when he beheld her face, a bright gleam came over his faded countenance, awakening in it all those peculiar signs and marks of strong intellect and intense feeling which the moment before had seemed extinct and gone. It was like the lightning flashing over some noble ruin in the midst of the deep darkness of the night.

"Is it you, my sweet child?" he cried, in a faint voice, that was scarcely audible even in the midst of the still silence. "Is it you that have come to visit me in this abode of wretchedness and agony? This is indeed a blessing and a comfort; a blessing to see that there are some faithful even to the last; a comfort and a joy to find that she on whose truth and steadfastness I had fixed such hopes, has not deceived me; and yet," he exclaimed, while Clémence gazed upon him with the tears rolling rapidly over her cheeks, and the sobs struggling hard for utterance, "and yet why, oh why have you come here? why have you risked so much,

my child, to sooth the few short hours that to-morrow's noon shall see at an end?"

"Oh, dear friend," said Clémence, kneeling down beside the pallet, "could I do otherwise, when I was in this very town, than strive to see you, my guide, my instructer, my teacher in right, my warner of the path that I ought to shun? Could I do otherwise when I thought that there was none to sooth, that there was none to console you; that in the darkness and the agony of these awful hours there was not one voice to speak comfort or to say one word of sympathy?"

"My child, you are mistaken," replied the old man, striving to raise himself upon his arm, and sinking back again with a low groan. "There has been one to comfort, there has been one to support me. He to whom I go has never abandoned me: neither in the midst of insult and degradation, no, nor in the moment of agony and torture, nor in those long and weary hours that have passed since they bore these ancient limbs from the rack on which they had bound them, and cast them down here to endure the time in darkness, in pain, and in utter helplessness, till at noon to-morrow the work will be accomplished on the bloody wheel, and the prisoner in this ruined clay will receive a joyful summons to fly far to his Redeemer's throne."

The tears rained down from the eyes of Clémence de Marly like the drops of a summer shower; but she dared not trust herself to speak: and after pausing to take breath, which came evidently with difficulty, the old man went on: "But still I say, Clémence, still I say, why have you come hither? You know not the danger, you know not the peril in which you are."

"What!" cried Clémence, "should I fear danger, should I fear peril in such a case as this? Let them do to me what they will, let them do to me what God permits them to do! To have knelt here beside you, to have spoken one word of comfort to you, to have wiped the drops from that venerable brow in this awful moment, would be a sufficient recompense to Clémence de Marly for all that she could suffer."

"God forbid," cried the pastor, "that they should make you suffer as they can. You know not what it is, my child, you know not what it is! If it were possible that an immortal spirit, armed with God's truth, should consent unto a lie, that torture might well pro-

duce so awful a falling off! But you recall me, my child, to what I was saying. I have not been alone, I have not been uncomforted even here. The word of God has been with me in my heart, the Spirit of God has sustained my spirit, the sufferings of my Saviour have drowned my sufferings, the hope of immortality has made me bear the utmost pains of earth. When they had taken away the printed words from before mine eyes, when they had shut out the light of heaven, so that I could not have seen, even if the holy book had been left, they thought they had deprived me of my solace. But they forgot that every word thereof was in my heart; that it was written there with the bright memories of my early days; that it was traced there with the calm recollections of my manhood; that it was printed there with sufferings and with tears; that it was graven there with smiles and joys; that with every act of my life, and thought of my past being, those words of the revealed will of God were mingled, and never could be separated; and it came back to me even here, and blessed me in the dungeon; it came back to me before the tribunal of my enemies, and gave me a mouth and wisdom; it came back to me on the torturing rack, and gave me strength to endure without a groan; it came back to me even as I was lying mangled here, and made the wheel of to-morrow seem a blessed resting-place."

"Alas, alas!" cried Clémence, "when I see you here, when I see you thus suffering, when I see you thus the sport of cruelty and persecution, I feel that I have judged too harshly of poor Albert in regard to his taking arms against the oppressors; I feel that perhaps, like him, I should have thus acted, even though I called the charge of ingratitude upon my head."

"And is he free, then? is he free?" demanded the pastor, eagerly.

"He is free," replied Clémence, "and, as we hear, in arms against the king."

"Oh, entreat him to lay them down," exclaimed the pastor; "beseech him not to attempt it. Tell him that ruin and death can be the only consequences: tell him that the Protestant church is at an end in France: tell him that flight to lands where the pure faith is known and loved is the only hope: tell him that resistance is destruction to him and to all others. Tell him so, my

child, tell him so from me: tell him so—but hark!" he continued, "what awful sound is that?" for even while he was speaking, and apparently close to the spot where the dungeon was situated, a sharp explosion took place, followed by a multitude of heavy blows given with the most extraordinary rapidity. No voices were distinguished for some minutes, and the blows continued without a moment's cessation, thundering one upon the other with a vehemence and force which seemed to shake the whole building.

"It is surely," said Clémence, "somebody attacking the prison door. Perhaps, oh Heaven! perhaps it is some one trying to deliver you."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the old man; "Heaven forbid that they should madly rush to such an attempt for the purpose of saving, for a few short hours, this wretched frame from that death which will be a relief. Hark, do you not hear cries and shouts?"

Clémence listened, and she distinctly heard many voices apparently elevated, but at a distance, while the sound of the blows continued thundering upon what was evidently the door of the prison, and a low murmur, as if of persons speaking round, joined with the space to make the farther cries indistinct. A pause succeeded for a moment or two; but then came the sound of galloping horse, and then a sharp discharge of musketry, instantly followed by the loud report of firearms from a spot immediately adjacent to the building. Clémence clasped her hands in terror, while her attendant Maria, filled with the dangerous situation in which they were placed, ran and pushed the door of the dungeon, idly endeavouring to force it open.

In the mean while, for two or three minutes nothing was heard but shouts and cries, with two or three musket shots; then came a volley, then another, then two or three more shots, then the charging of horse, mingled with cries, and shouts, and screams, while still the thundering blows continued, and at length a loud and tremendous crash was heard shaking the whole building. A momentary pause succeeded, the blows were no longer heard, and the next sound was the rush of many feet. A moment of doubt and apprehension, of anxiety, nay, of terror, followed. Clémence was joyful at the thought of the pastor's deliverance; but what, she asked herself, was to be her own fate, even

if the purpose of those who approached was the good man's liberation! Another volley from without broke in upon the other sounds; but, in an instant after, the rushing of the feet approached the door where they were, and manifold voices were heard speaking.

"It is locked," cried one; "where can the villain be with the keys?"

"Get back," cried another loud voice; "give me but a fair stroke at it."

A blow like thunder followed; and seeming to fall upon the locks and bolts of the door, dashed them at once to pieces, driving a part of the woodwork into the dungeon itself. Two more blows cast the whole mass, wrenched from its hinges, to the ground. A multitude of people rushed in, some of them bearing lights, all armed to the teeth, some bloody, some begrimed with smoke and gunpowder; fierce excitement flashing from every eye, and eager energy upon every face.

"He is here, he is here," they shouted to the others without. "Make way, make way, let us bring him out."

"But who are these women?" cried another voice.

"Friends, friends, dear friends, come to comfort me," cried the pastor.

"Blessings on the tongue that so often has taught us," cried other voices, while several ran forward and kissed his hands with tears; "blessings on the heart that has guided and directed us."

"Stand back, my friends, stand back," cried a gigantic man, with an immense sledge-hammer in his hand, "let me break the chain;" and, at a single blow, he dashed the strong links to atoms.

"Now bring them all along!" he cried, "now bring them all along! Take up the good man on the bed, and carry him out."

"Bring them all along! bring them all along!" cried a thousand voices, and, without being listened to in anything that she had to say, Clémence, clinging as closely as she could to her attendant, was hurried out along the narrow passages of the prison, which were now flashing with manifold lights, into the dark little square, which was found filled with people. Multitudes of lights were in all the windows round, and, covering the prison, a strong band of men were drawn up facing the opposite street. A number of persons on horseback were in front of the band, and, by the lights which

were flashing from the torches in the street, one commanding figure appeared to the eyes of Clémence at the very moment she was brought forth from the doors of the prison, stretching out his hand towards the men behind him, and shouting, in a voice that she could never forget, though now that voice was raised into tones of loud command, such as she had never heard it use. "Hold! hold! the man that fires a shot dies! Not one unnecessary shot, not one unnecessary blow!"

Clémence strove to turn that way, and to fly towards the hotel where Monsieur de Rouvré lodged; but she was borne away by the stream, which seemed to be now retreating from the town. At the same moment an armed man laid gently hold of her cloak, seeing her efforts to free herself, and said,

"This way, lady, this way. It is madness for you to think to go back now. You are with friends. You are with one who will protect you with his life, for your kindness to the murdered and the lost."

She turned round to gaze upon him, not recollecting his voice; and his face, in the indistinct light, seemed to her like a face remembered in a dream, connected with the awful scene of the preaching on the moor, and the dark piece of water, and the dying girl killed by the shot of the dragoons. Ere she could ask any questions, however, the stream of people hurried her on, and in a few minutes she was out of Thouars, and in the midst of the open country round.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DEATH OF THE PERSECUTED.

When the flight had been conducted for about two miles in the midst of the perfect darkness which surrounded the whole scene—for the lights and torches which had appeared in the town had been extinguished, with the exception of one or two, on leaving it—the voice which had before addressed Clémence de Marly again spoke nearer, apparently giving command, as some one in authority over the others.

"Where is the litter?" he exclaimed. "Where is the litter that was brought for the good minister? Bring it hither: he will be more easy in that."

Clémence had kept as near as she could to the spot where Claude de l'Estang was carried, and she now heard him answer in a faint and feeble voice,

"Do not move me: in pity do not move me. My limbs are so strained and dislocated by the rack, that the slightest movement pains me. Carry me as I am, if you will; but move me not from this bed."

"Well, then, place these two ladies in the litter," said the same voice. "We shall go faster then."

Without asking her consent, Clémence de Marly was placed in the small hand-litter which had been brought for the pastor; her maid took the place by her side, and, lifted on the shoulders of four men, she was carried on more quickly, gaining a faint and indistinct view of what was passing around from the more elevated situation in which she now was.

They were mounting slowly the side of the hill, about two miles from the town of Thouars, and she could catch a distant view of the dark towers and masses of the town as it then existed, rising above the objects around. From thence, as far as her eye was able to distinguish, a stream of people was flowing on all along the road to the very spot where she was, and several detached parties were seen here and there, crossing the different eminences on either side, so that the force assembled must have been very considerable. She listened eagerly for any sound from the direction of Thouars, apprehensive at every moment that she would hear the firing renewed; for she knew, or at least she believed she knew, that Albert of Morseiul, with the better disciplined band which he seemed to command, would be the last to leave the city he had so boldly entered. Nothing, however, confirmed her expectation. There was a reddish light over the town, as if there were either fires in the streets, or that the houses were generally lighted up; but all was silent, except a dull, distant murmur, heard when the sound of the marching feet ceased from any cause for a moment. Few words passed between Clémence and her attendant; for though Maria was a woman of a calm, determined spirit in moments of immediate danger, and possessed with a degree of religious zeal, which was a strong support in

times of peril and difficulty, yet the scenes in the prison and the dungeon, the horrors which she had only dreamed of before brought actually before her eyes, had not precisely unnerved, but had rendered her thoughtful and silent. The only sentence which she ventured to address to her mistress, without being spoken to, was,

"Oh, madam, is the young count so much to blame, after all?"

"Alas, Maria," replied Clémence, in the same low tone, "I think that all are to blame, more or less. Deep provocation has certainly been given; but I do think that Albert ought to have acted differently. He had not these scenes before his eyes when he fled to put himself at the head of the insurgents; and, ere he did so, he certainly owed something to me and something to the king. Nevertheless, since I have seen what I have seen, and heard what I have heard, I can make excuses which I could not make before."

The attendant made no reply, and the conversation dropped. The march continued rapidly for three or four hours, till at length there was a short halt, and a brief consultation seemed to take place between two or three of the leaders on horseback. The principal part of the men on foot, exhausted, as it appeared, by great exertion, sat or lay down by the roadside; but, ere the conference had gone on for above five minutes, a cavalier, followed by several other men on horseback, came up at the full gallop; and again the deep mellow tones of that remarkable voice struck the ear of Clémence de Marly, and made her whole frame thrill. His words, or, as they appeared, commands, were but few; and, without either approaching the side of Claude de l'Estang or herself, he rode back again in haste, and the march was renewed.

Ere long, a fine cold rain began to fall, chilling those it lighted on to the very heart; and Clémence thought she perceived that, as they advanced, the number of people gradually fell away. At length, after a long and fatiguing march through the night, as the faint gray of the dawn began to appear, she found that, at the very utmost, there were not above a hundred of the armed Protestants around her. The party was evidently under the command of a short but powerfully made man on horseback, whom she recognised as the person who had

carried the unfortunate novice Claire in his arms to the house of Claude de l'Estang. He rode on constantly by the side of the bed in which the good pastor was carried on men's shoulders, and, bowing down his head from time to time, he spoke to him with what seemed words of comfort and hope. They were now on a part of the road from Thouars towards Nantes, that passed through the midst of one of those wide sandy tracts called in France *landes*, across which a sort of causeway had been made by felled trees, rough and painful of passage, even to the common carts of the country. This causeway, however, was soon quitted by command of Armand Herval. One party took its way through the sands to the right; and the rest, following the litters, bent their course across the country towards a spot where a dark heavy line bounded the portion of the *landes* within sight, and seemed to denote a large wood of the deep black pine, which grows better than any other tree in that sandy soil. It was near an hour before they reached the wood; and even underneath its shadow the shifting sand continued, only diversified a little by a few thin blades of green grass, sufficient to feed the scanty flocks of sheep, which form the only riches of that tract.

In the midst of the wood—where they had found or formed a little oasis around them—were two shepherds' cottages; and to these the party commanded by Armand Herval at once directed its course. An old man and two boys came out as they approached, but with no signs of surprise; and Claude de l'Estang was carried to one of the cottages, into which Clémence followed. She had caught a sight of the good man's face as they bore him past her, and she saw that there was another sad and painful task before her, for which she nerved her mind.

"Now, good Antoine," said Armand Herval, speaking to one of the shepherds, "lead out the sheep with all speed, and take them over all the tracks of men and horses that you may meet with. You will do it carefully, I know. We have delivered the good man, as you see; but I fear, I fear much that we have, after all, come too late, for the butchers have put him to the question, and almost torn him limb from limb. God knows I made what speed I could, and so did the count."

The old shepherd to whom he spoke made no reply, but listened, gazing in his face with a look of deep melancholy. One of the younger men who stood by, however, said, "We heard the firing. I suppose they strove hard to keep him."

"That they assuredly did!" replied Herval, his brows knitting as he spoke; "and if we had not been commanded by such a man, they would not only have kept him, but us too. One half of our people failed us. Boursault was not there. Kerac and his band never came. We were full seven hundred short, and then the petard went off too soon and did no good, but brought the whole town upon us. They had dragoons, too, from Niort; and tried first to drive us back, then to take us in flank by the tower-street, then to barricade the way behind us; but they found they had to do with a Count de Morseiul, and they were met everywhere, and everywhere defeated. Yet, after all," continued the man, "he will ruin us from his fear of shedding any blood but his own. But I must go in and see after the good man, and then speed to the woods. We shall be close round about, and one sound of a conch* will bring a couple of hundred to help you, good Antoine."

Thus saying, he went into the cottage, where Clémence had already taken her place by the side of the unhappy pastor's bed; and, on the approach of Herval, she raised her finger gently to indicate that he slept. He had, indeed, fallen into momentary slumber, utterly exhausted by suffering and fatigue; but the fallen temples, the sharpened features, the pale ashy hue of the countenance, showed to the eyes of Clémence, at least, that the sleep was not that from which he would wake refreshed and better. Herval, less acute in his perceptions, judged differently; and, after assuring Clémence in a whisper that she was quite in safety there, as the woods round were filled with the band, he left her, promising to return ere night.

Clémence would fain have asked after Albert of Morseiul, and might, perhaps, have expressed a wish to see

* This large shell is used in many of the seacoast districts of France still for the purpose of giving signals. The sound, when properly blown, is very powerful and peculiar. They assert that across a level country it can be heard six miles. I have myself heard it more than two, and so distinctly that it must have been audible at a much greater distance.

him; but there were strange feelings of timidity in her heart which kept her silent till the man was gone, and then she regretted that she had not spoken, and accused herself of weakness. During the time that she now sat watching by the pastor's side, she had matter enough for thought in her own situation. What was now to become of her, was a question that frequently addressed itself to her heart; and, more than once, as she thus sat and pondered, the warm ingenuous blood rushed up into her cheek at thoughts which naturally arose in her bosom from the consideration of the strange position in which she was placed. Albert of Morseiul had not seen her, she knew. He could not even divine or imagine that she was at Thouars at all, much less in the prison itself; but yet she felt somewhat reproachfully towards him, as if he should have divined that it was she whom he saw borne along, not far from the unhappy pastor. Though she acknowledged, too, in her own heart, that there were great excuses to be made for the decided part which her lover had taken in the insurrection of that part of the country, still she was not satisfied altogether with his having done so; still she called him, in her own heart, both rash and ungrateful.

On the other hand, she remembered that she had written to him in haste and in some degree of anger, or, at least, of bitter disappointment; that she had refused, without explaining all the circumstances which prevented her, to share his flight as she had previously promised; that, hurried and confused, she had neither told him that, at the very time she was writing, the Duchess de Rouvré waited to accompany her to the court, and that to fly at such a moment was impossible; nor that, during the whole of the following day, she was to remain at Versailles, where the eyes of every one would be upon her, more especially attracted towards her by the news of her lover's flight, which must by that time be generally known. She feared, too, that in that letter she had expressed herself harshly, even unkindly; she feared that those very words might have driven the count into the desperate course which he had adopted; and she asked herself, with feelings such as she had never experienced before, when contemplating a meeting with Albert of Morseiul, how would he receive her?

In short, in thinking of the count, she felt that she

had been somewhat in the wrong in regard to her conduct towards him. But she felt, also, at the same time, that he had been likewise in the wrong, and, therefore, what she had first to anticipate were the words of mutual reproach rather than the words of mutual affection. Such was one painful theme of thought, and how she was to shape her own immediate conduct was another. To return to the house of the Duke de Rouvré seemed utterly out of the question. She had been found in the prison of Claude de l'Estang. Her religious feelings could no longer be concealed; her renunciation of the Catholic faith was sure, at that time, to be looked upon as nothing short of treason; and death or eternal punishment was the only fate that would befall her, if she were once cast into the hands of the Roman Catholic party.

What, then, was she to do? Was she to throw herself at once upon the protection of Albert of Morseiul? Was she to bind her fate to his for ever, at the very moment when painful points of difference had arisen between them? Was she to cast herself upon his bounty as a suppliant, instead of holding the same proud situation she had formerly held; instead of being able to confer upon him that which he would consider an inestimable benefit, while she herself enhanced its value beyond all price by the sacrifice of all and everything for him? Was she now, on the contrary—when it seemed as if she had refused to make that sacrifice for his sake—to come to him as a fugitive claiming his protection, to demand his bounty and his support, and to supplicate permission to share the fate in which he might think she had shown a disinclination to participate, till she was compelled to do so?

The heart of Clémence de Marly was wrung at the thought. She knew that Albert of Morseiul was generous, noble, kind-hearted. She felt that, very likely, he might view the case in much brighter hues than she herself depicted it to her own mind; she felt that, if she were a suppliant to him, no reproach would ever spring to his lips; no cold, averted look would ever tell her that he thought she had treated him ill. But she asked herself whether those reproaches would not be in his heart; and the pride, which might have taken arms and supported her under any distinct and open charge, gave way at the thought of being condemned and yet cherished.

How should she act, then? how should she act? she asked herself; and, as Clémence de Marly was far from one of those perfect creatures who always act right from the first impulse, the struggle between contending feelings was long and terrible, and mingled with some tears. Her determination, however, was right at length.

"I will tell him all I have felt and all I think," she said. "I will utter no reproach: I will say not one word to wound him: I will let him see once more how deeply and truly I love him. I will hear, without either pride or anger, anything that Albert of Morseiul will say to me; and then, having done so, I will trust to his generosity to do the rest. I need not fear! Surely I need not fear!" and with this resolution she became more composed, the surest and the strongest proof that it was right.

But, to say the truth, since the perils of the night just passed; since she had beheld him she loved in a new character; since, with her own eyes, she had seen him commanding in the strife of men, and everything seeming to yield to the will of his powerful and intrepid mind, new feelings had mingled with her love for him, of which what she had experienced when he rode beside her at the hunting-party at Poitiers had been but, as it were, a type. It was not fear, but it was some degree of awe. She felt that, with all her own strength of mind, with all her own brightness of intellect and self-possession, there were mightier qualities in his character to which she must bow down: that she, in fact, was woman, altogether woman, in his presence.

As she thus thought, a slight motion on the bed where Claude de l'Estang was laid made her turn her eyes thither. The old man had awoke from his short slumber, and his eyes, still bright and intelligent, notwithstanding the approach of death and the exhaustion of his shattered frame, were turned towards her with an earnest and a melancholy expression.

"I hope you feel refreshed," said Clémence, bending over him. "You have had some sleep; and I trust it has done you good."

"Do not deceive yourself, my dear child," replied the old man. "No sleep can do me good, but that deep, powerful one which is soon coming. I wait but God's will, Clémence, and I trust that he will soon give the spirit liberty. It will be in mercy, Clémence, that he

sends death; for, were life to be prolonged, think what it would be to this torn and mangled frame. Neither hand nor foot can I move, nor were it possible to give back strength to my limbs or ease to my body. Every hour that I remain, I look upon but as a trial of patience and of faith, and I will not murmur; no, Clémence, not even in thought, against His almighty will, who bids me drag on the weary minutes longer. But yet, when the last of those minutes has come, oh! how gladly shall I feel the summons that others dread and fly from! I would fain, my child," he said, "I would fain hear, and from your lips, some of that blessed word which the misguided persecutors of our church deny unmutilated to the blind followers of their faith, though every word therein speaks hope, and consolation, and counsel, and direction to the heart of man."

"Alas! good father," replied Clémence, "the Bible which I always carry with me was left behind when I came to see you in prison, and I know not where to find one here."

"The people in this or the neighbouring cottage have one," said the pastor. "They are good honest souls, whom I have often visited in former days."

As the good woman of the cottage had gone out, almost immediately after the arrival of the party, to procure some herbs, which she declared would sooth the pastor greatly, Clémence proceeded to the other cottage, where she found an old man with a Bible in his hand, busily reading a portion thereof to a little boy who stood near. He looked up, and gave her the book as soon as she told him the purpose for which she came, and then, following into the cottage where the pastor lay, he and the boy stood by, and listened attentively while she read such chapters as Claude de l'Estang expressed a wish to hear.

Those chapters were not, in general, such as might have been supposed. They were not those which hold out the glorious promises of everlasting life to men who suffer for their faith in this state of being. They were not such as portray to us, in its real and spiritual character, that other world, to which the footsteps of all are tending. It seemed as if, of such things, the mind of the pastor was so fully convinced, so intimately and perfectly sure, that they were as parts of his own being. But the passages that he selected were those in which

our Redeemer lays down all the bright, perfect, and unchangeable precepts for the rule and governance of man's own conduct, which form the only code of law and philosophy that can indeed be called divine. And in that last hour it seemed the greatest hope and consolation which the dying man could receive, to ponder upon those proofs of divine love and wisdom which nothing but the Spirit of God himself could have dictated.

Thus passed the whole of the day. From time to time Clémence paused, and the pastor spoke a few words to those who surrounded him: words of humble comment on what was read, or pious exhortation. At other times, when his fair companion was tired, the attendant Maria would take the book and read. No noises, no visit from without, disturbed the calm. It seemed as if their persecutors were at fault; and though from time to time one of the different members of those shepherd families passed in or out, no other persons were seen moving upon the face of the *landes;* no sounds were heard but their own low voices throughout the short light of a November day. To one fresh from the buzz of cities and the busy activity of man, the contrast of the stillness and the solitude was strange; but doubly strange and exceeding solemn were they to the mind of her who came fresh from the perturbed and fevered visions of the preceding night, and saw that day lapse away like a long and quiet sleep.

Towards the dusk of the evening, however, her attendant laid her hand upon her arm as she was still reading, saying, "There is a change coming;" and Clémence paused and gazed down upon the old man's countenance. It looked very gray; but whether from the shadows of the evening, or from the loss of whatever hue of living health remained, she could hardly tell. But the difference was not so great in the colour as in the expression. The look of pain and suffering which, notwithstanding all his efforts to bear his fate with tranquillity, had still marked that fine expressive countenance, was gone, and a calm and tranquil aspect had succeeded, although the features were extremely sharpened, the eye sunk, and the temples hollow. It was the look of a body and a spirit at peace; and, for a moment, as the eyes were turned up towards the sky, Clémence imagined that the spirit was gone: but the next moment he

looked round towards her, as if inquiring why she stopped.

"How are you, sir?" she said. "You seem more at ease."

"I am quite at ease, Clémence," replied the old man. "All pain has left me. I am somewhat cold, but that is natural; and, for the last half hour, the remains of yesterday's agony have been wearing away, as I have seen snow upon a hill's side melt in the April sunshine. It is strange, and scarcely to be believed, that death should be so pleasant; for this is death, my child, and I go away from this world of care and pain with a foretaste of the mercies of the next. It is very slow, but still it is coming, Clémence, and bringing healing on its wings. Death, the messenger of God's will, to one that trusts in his mercy, is indeed the harbinger of that peace of God which passes all understanding."

He paused a little, and his voice had grown considerably weaker, even while he spoke. "God forgive my enemies," he said at length, "and the mistaken men who persecute others for their soul's sake. God forgive them, and yield them a better light; for oh how I wish that all men could feel death only as I feel it!"

Such were the last words of Claude de l'Estang. They were perfectly audible and distinct to every one present, and they were spoken with the usual calm, sweet simplicity of manner which had characterized all the latter part of his life. But, after he had again paused for two or three minutes, he opened his lips as if to say something more, but no sound was heard. He instantly felt that such was the case, and ceased; but he feebly stretched forth his hand towards Clémence, who bent her head over it and dewed it with her tears.

When she raised her eyes they fell upon the face of the dead.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DISCOVERY OF ERROR.

We must now change the scene and time, though the spot to which we will conduct the reader is not situated more than ten miles from that in which the events took place recorded in the last chapter, and only one day's interval had elapsed. Considerably more inland, it presented none of that sandy appearance which characterizes the *landes*. The vegetation also was totally different; the rich, even rank grass spreading under the tall trees of the forest, and the ivy covering those which had lost their leaves thus early in the year.

There was a little chateau, belonging to an inferior noble of the province, situated in the midst of one of those wide woods which the French of that day took the greatest pains to maintain in a flourishing condition, both for the sake of the fuel which they afforded, and the cover that they gave to the objects of the chase. The chateau itself was built, as usual, upon an eminence of considerable elevation, overlooking the forest world around, and in its immediate neighbourhood the wood was cleared away so as to give an open esplanade, along which, upon the present occasion, some fifteen hundred or two thousand men had passed the preceding day and night, having liberated the poor pastor of Auron on the night before. Some few tents of rude construction, some huts hastily raised, had been their only shelter; but they murmured not; and indeed it was not from such causes that any of those who deserted from the body of Protestant insurgents quitted the standard of their leader. It was, that the agents of the governing priesthood had long been busy among them, and had sapped the principles and shaken the resolution of many of those who even showed themselves willing to take arms, but who soon fell away in the hour of need, acting more detrimentally on their own cause than if they had absolutely opposed it, or abandoned it from the first. Doubts of each other, and hesitation in their purposes, had thus been spread through the Protestants; and

though, of the number assembled there, few existed who had now either inclination or opportunity to turn back, yet they thought with gloomy apprehension upon the defection that was daily taking place in the great body of Huguenots throughout France; and their energies were chilled even if their resolution was not shaken.

The day of which we now speak rose with a brighter aspect than the preceding one, and it was scarcely more than daylight when the gates of the castle were opened, the horses of the Count de Morseiul and his immediate officers and attendants were brought out, and, in a minute after, he himself, booted and spurred, and bearing energetic activity in his eye, came forth upon the esplanade, surrounded by a number of persons, who were giving him information or receiving his orders. The men who were gathered in arms on the slope of the hill gazed up towards him with that sort of expectation which is near akin to hope; and the prompt rapidity of his gestures, the quickness with which he was speaking, the ease with which he seemed to comprehend everybody, and the readiness and capability, if we may so call it, of his own demeanour, was marked by all those that looked upon him, and gave trust and confidence even to the faintest heart there.

"Where is Riquet?" the count said, after speaking to some of the gentlemen who had taken arms; "where is Riquet? He told me that two persons had arrived from Paris last night, and were safe in his chamber. Where is Riquet?"

"Riquet! Riquet!" shouted several voices, sending the sound back into the castle; but, in the mean time, the count went on speaking to those around them in a sorrowful tone.

"So poor Monsieur de l'Estang is dead!" he said. "That is a shining light, indeed, put out. He died yesterday evening, you say? God forgive me that I should regret him at such a moment as this, and wish that he had been left to us. There was not a nobler or a wiser, or, what is the same thing, a better man in France. I have known him from my childhood, gentlemen, and you must not think me weak that I cannot bear this loss as manly as might be," and he dashed a tear away from his eye. "That they should torture such a venerable form as that!" he added; "that they should stretch upon the rack him who never pained or tortured

any one! These things are too fearful, gentlemen, almost to be believed. The time will come when they shall be looked upon but as a doubtful tale. Is it not six of our pastors in Poitou alone that they have broken on the wheel? Out upon them, inhuman savages! Out upon them, I say! But what was this you told me of some ladies having been freed from the prison? Oh, here is Riquet. Now, sirrah, what are your tidings? Who are these personages from Paris?"

"One of them, sir," replied Riquet, whose tone was changed in no degree by the new situation in which he was placed, "one of them is your lordship's own man, or, rather, your lordship's man's man, Peter. He is the personage that I left in Paris to give the order for your liberation that you wot of."

"Ay!" said the count; "what made him so long in following us? He was not detained by any chance, was he?"

"Oh no, my lord," replied the valet, "he was not detained, only he thought—he thought—I do not know very well what he thought. But, however, he stayed for two or three days, and is only just come on hither."

"Does he bring any news?" demanded the count.

"None, but that the Prince de Conti is dead, very suddenly indeed, of the smallpox, caught of his fair wife; that all Protestants are ordered to leave Paris immediately; and that the Duke of Berwick has made formal abjuration."

"I grieve for the Prince de Conti," said the count; "he was promising and soldier-like; though the other, the young Prince de la Roche-sur-Yon, is full of still higher qualities. So the boy Duke of Berwick has abjured. That might be expected. No other news?"

"None, my lord, from him," replied the man, who evidently was a little embarrassed in speaking on the subject of his fellow-servant; and he added immediately, "the other gentleman seems to have news, but he will communicate it to none but yourself."

"I will speak with them both," replied the count. "Bring them hither immediately, Riquet."

"Why, my lord," said the valet, "as to Peter, I do not well know where—"

"You must know where within three minutes," replied the count, who in general interpreted pretty accurately the external signs and symbols of what was

going on in Riquet's heart. "You must know where within three minutes, and that where must be here by my side. Maître Riquet, remember, though somewhat indulgent in the saloon or the cabinet, I am not to be trifled with in the field. Now, gentlemen, what were we speaking of just now? Oh, these ladies. Have you any idea of what they were in prison for? Doubtless for worshipping God according to their consciences. That is the great crime now. But I did not know that they had begun to persecute poor women;" and a shade of deep melancholy came over his fine features as he thought of what might be the situation of Clémence de Marly.

"Why, it would seem, sir," replied one of the gentlemen, "from what I can hear, that the ladies were not there as prisoners; but were two charitable persons of the town of Thouars, who had come to give comfort and consolation to our poor friend Monsieur de l'Estang."

"God's blessing will be upon them," replied the count, "for it was a noble and a generous deed in such times as these. But here comes Master Riquet with our two newly-arrived friends. Good heavens, my old acquaintance of the Bastile! Sir, I am very glad to see you free, and should be glad to see you in this poor province of Poitou, could we but give you any other entertainment than bullets and hard blows, and scenes of sorrow or of strife."

"No matter, no matter, my young friend," replied the old Englishman; "to such entertainment I am well accustomed. It has been meat and drink to me from my youth; and though I cannot exactly say that I will take any other part in these transactions, being bound in honour, in some sense, not to do so, yet I will take my part in any dangers that are going willingly. But do not let me stop you if you are going to ask any questions of that fellow, who came the last five or six miles with me; for, if you don't get him out of the hands of that rascal of yours, there will be no such thing as truth in him in five minutes."

"Come hither, Peter," cried the count. "Maître Riquet, you have face enough for anything; so stand here. Now, Peter, the truth at one word! What was it that Riquet was telling you not to tell me!"

"Why, my lord," replied the man, glancing his eye from his master to the valet, and the awe of the former

in a moment overpowering the awe of the latter; "why, my lord, he was saying that there was no need to tell your lordship that I never delivered the order that he gave me to deliver at the gates of the Bastile."

The count stood for a moment gazing on him thunderstruck. "You never delivered the order!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to say you never delivered the order he gave you for my liberation?"

"No, my lord," replied the man, beginning to quake in every limb for fear that he had done something wrong. "I never did deliver the order. But I'll tell your lordship why. I thought there was no use of delivering it, for, just as I was walking up to do so, and had made myself look as like a courier of the court as I could, I saw you yourself going along the Rue St. Antoine, with two boys staring up in your face, and I thought I might only make mischief for myself or you if I went and said anything more about the matter. When I knew you were free, I thought that was quite enough."

"Certainly, certainly," replied the count; "but, in the name of Heaven, then, by whom have I been delivered?"

"Why, my lord, that is difficult to say," replied Riquet, "but not by that fellow, who has brought me back the order as I gave it to him; and now—as very likely your lordship would wish to know—I told him not to tell you, simply because it would tease you to no purpose, and take away from me the honour of having set your lordship free, without doing you any good."

"You are certainly impudent enough for your profession," replied the count, "and in this instance as foolish as knavish. The endeavour and the risk were still the same, and it is for that I owe you thanks, not for the success or want of success."

"Ah, sir," replied Riquet, "if all masters were so noble and generous, we poor valets should not get spoiled so early. But how you have been liberated, Heaven only knows."

"That's a mistake," replied the old English officer; "everybody at the court of France knows. The king was in a liberating mood one week, and he himself gave an order for the count's liberation one day, and for mine two days afterward. I heard of it when I went to present myself before the king, and the whole court was ringing with what they called your ingratitude,

count; for by that time it was known on what errand you had set off hither."

The count clasped his hands together and looked down upon the ground. "I fear," he said, in a low voice, "that I have been sadly misled."

"Not by me, my lord, upon my honour!" cried Riquet, with an earnest look. "I did my best to serve you and to deliver you; and I fully thought that by my means it had been done. The man can tell you that he had the order from me: he can produce it now—"

"I blame you not, Riquet," said his master, "I blame you not! you acted for the best; but most unhappily has this chanced, to bring discredit on a name which never yet was stained. It is now too late to think of it, however. My part is chosen, and there is no retracting."

'When on my visit to the court," said the old English officer, "in order to return thanks for my liberation and to demand certain acts of justice, I heard you blamed, I replied, my good sir, that we in England held that private affections must never interfere with public duties; and that doubtless you felt the part you had chosen to be a public duty. They seemed not to relish the doctrine there, nor you fully to feel its force, I think."

"My dear sir," said the count, "I have not time to discuss nicely all the collateral points which affect that question. All I will say is, that in following such a broad rule, there is much need to be upon our guard against one of man's greatest enemies—his own deceitful heart; and to make sure that, in choosing the seeming part of public duty, to be not as much influenced by private affections—among which I class vanity, pride, anger, revenge—as in adopting the opposite course."

"That is true, too; that is true, too," replied the other. "Man puts me in mind of an ape I once saw, whose greatest delight was to tickle himself; but, if any one else tried to do it, he would bite to the bone. But I see you are about to march, and some of your people have got their troops already in motion. If you will allow me half an hour's conversation as we ride along, I shall be glad. I will get my horse and mount in a minute."

"The horse that brought you here must be tired," replied the count; "my people have several fresh ones. Riquet, see that a horse be saddled quickly for—this

gentleman. A strange piece of ignorance, sir," he continued, "but I am still unacquainted with your name."

"Oh, Thomas Cecil, my good count," replied the old officer, "Sir Thomas Cecil; but I will go get the horse, and be with you in a moment."

The count bowed his head, and, while the Englishman was away, proceeded to conclude all his arrangements for the march. In something like regular order, but still with evident symptoms of no long training in the severe rules of military discipline, the count's little force began to march, and a great part thereof was winding down the hill when the old Englishman returned.

"That is a fine troop," he said, "just now getting into motion. If you had many such as that you might do something."

"They are a hundred of my own Protestant tenantry and citizens," replied the count. "They have all served under me long in the late war, and were disbanded after the truce of twenty years was signed. There is not a braver or steadier handful in Europe; and, since I have been placed as I am, I make it a point to lead them at the head in any offensive operations on our part, and to follow with them in the rear in the event of a retreat, which, you see, is the case now. You will let them precede us a little, and then we can converse at leisure."

Thus saying, he mounted his horse; and, after seeing the little body, which he called his legion, take its way down the hill, he followed, accompanied by Sir Thomas, with a small party of attendants fifty yards behind them.

"And now, my good sir," said the young nobleman, "you will not think me of scanty courtesy if I say that it may be necessary to tell me in what I can serve you; or, in fact, to speak more plainly, if I ask the object of your coming to my quarters at once, as I am informed that the intendant of the province, with what troops he can bring together from Berry and Rouergue, forming altogether a very superior force to our own, is marching to attack us. If he can do so in our retreat, of course he will be glad to avail himself of the opportunity, especially as I have been led away from the part of the country which it is most easy to defend with such troops as ours, in order to prevent an act of brutal persecution which they were going to perpetrate on one of the best of men. Thus our time for conversation may be short."

"Why, you have not let him surprise you, I hope?" exclaimed the old officer.

"Not exactly that," replied the count; "but we are come into a part of the country where the people are principally Catholic, and we find a difficulty in getting information. I am also obliged to make a considerable movement to the left of my real line of retreat, in order to prevent one of our most gallant fellows, and his band of nearly three hundred men, from being cut off. He is, it is true, both brave and skilful, and quite capable of taking care of himself; but I am sorry to say, grief and excitement have had an effect upon his brain, and he is occasionally quite insane; so that, without seeming to interfere with him too much, I am obliged, for the sake of those who are with him, to give more attention to his proceedings than might otherwise have been necessary."

The count paused, and the old officer replied, in a thoughtful tone, "I am in great hopes, from what I hear, that you will find more mild measures adopted towards you than you anticipate. Are you aware of who it is that has been sent down to command the troops in this district, in place of the former rash and cruel man?"

"No," replied the count; "but, from what I have heard during these last four days, I have been led to believe that a man of far greater skill and science is at the head of the king's troops. All their combinations have been so much more masterly, that I have found it necessary to be extremely cautious; whereas a fortnight ago I could have marched from one side of the country to the other without any risk."

"The officer," replied Sir Thomas Cecil, "was raised to the rank of major-general for the purpose, and is, I understand, an old friend of yours, the Chevalier d'Evran."

The count suddenly pulled up his horse, and gazed for a moment in the old man's face. "Then," said he, "the Protestant cause is ruined. It is not solely on account of Louis d'Evran's skill," he added, "that I say so: though, if ever any one was made for a great commander, he is that man; but he is mild and moderate, conciliating and good-humoured; and I have remarked that a little sort of fondness for mystery which he affects—concealing all things that he intends in a sort of dark cloud, till it flashes forth like lightning—has a very powerful effect upon all minds that are not of the first

order. The only bond that has kept the Protestants together has been sharp and bitter persecution lately endured. If any one equally gentle and firm, powerful and yet conciliating, appears against us, I shall not have five hundred men left in two days."

"And perhaps, count," said the old man, "not very sorry for it!"

The count turned his eyes upon him, and looked steadily in his face for a moment. "That, I think," he said, "is hardly a fair question, my good friend. I believe you, sir, from all I have seen of you, to be an upright and honourable man, and I have looked upon you as a sincere Protestant, and one suffering, in some degree, from your attachment to that faith. I take it for granted, then, that nothing which I have said to you this day is to be repeated."

"Nothing, upon my honour," replied Sir Thomas Cecil, frankly. "You are quite right in your estimation of me, I assure you. If I ask any question, it is for my own satisfaction, and because, sir, I take an interest in you. Nothing that passes your lips shall be repeated by me without your permission; though I tell you fairly and at once that I am going very soon to the headquarters of the Chevalier d'Evran, to fulfil a mission to him, which will be unsuccessful I know, but which must still be fulfilled. Will you trust me so far as this, count? Will you let me know whether you really wish this state of insurrection to go on; or would not rather, if mild—I will not call them equitable—terms could be obtained for the Protestants of this district, that peace should be restored and a hopeless struggle ended? I do not say hopeless," he continued, "at all to disparage your efforts; but—"

"My dear sir," replied the count, "act as bluntly by me as you did in the Bastile, call the struggle hopeless if you will. There are not ten men in my little force who do not know it to be hopeless, and those ten are fools. The only choice left, sir, to the Protestants of this district when I arrived here was between timid despair and courageous despair; to die by the slow fire of persecution without resistance, or to die with swords in our hands in a good cause. We chose the latter, which afforded, indeed, the only hope of wringing toleration from our enemies by a vigorous effort. But I am as well aware as you are that we have no power

sufficient to resist the power of the crown; that in the mountains, woods, and fastnesses of this district and of Brittany, upon which I am now retreating, I might perhaps frustrate the pursuit of the royal forces for months, nay, for years; living for weeks as a chief of banditti, and only appearing for a single day, from time to time, as the general of an army. Day by day my followers would decrease; for the scissors of inconvenience often shear down the forces of an insurgent leader more fatally than the sharp sword of war. Then, a thousand to one, no means that I could take would prevent all my people from committing evil acts. I, and a just and holy cause, would acquire a bad name, and the whole would end by the worst of my people betraying me to death upon the scaffold. All this, sir, was considered before I drew the sword; but you must remember that I had not the slightest idea whatsoever that the king had shown any disposition to treat me personally with anything but bitter severity. To return to your former question, then, and to answer it candidly and straightforwardly, but merely remember between you and I, I should not grieve on such reasonable terms being granted to the generality of Protestants as would enable them to live peacefully, adhering to their own religion, though it be in private; to see my men reduced, as I have said, to five hundred, ay, or to one hundred: provided those gallant men, who, with firm determination, adhere to the faith of their fathers, and are resolved neither to conceal that faith nor submit to its oppression, have the means of seeking liberty of conscience in another land. As for myself," he continued, with a deep sigh, "my mind is at present in such a state that I should little care, if once I saw this settled, to go to-morrow and lay my head at the foot of the king's throne. Abjure my religion I never will; live in a land where it is persecuted I never will; but life has lately become a load to me, and it were as well for all, under such circumstances, that it were terminated. This latter part of what I have said, sir, you may tell the Chevalier d'Evran: namely, that on the government granting such terms to the Protestants of this district as will ensure the two objects I have mentioned, the Count of Morseiul is willing to surrender himself to the pleasure of the king; though, till such terms are granted and my people so secured, nothing shall induce me to sheath

you. Since I have been here, and seen what I have seen, I have found many excuses for your conduct; and I have learned to think that what I wrote briefly I may have written harshly and unkindly, and to blame myself as much, nay, more than you: believing, though I had no time to explain why I could not come at the moment as I could have wished, yet that I should still have added such words as might show you that I was yours unchanged, however much I might judge that you had acted rashly, unadvisedly, and unlike yourself. I have determined to tell you all this at once, Albert, and, acknowledging that I blame myself, to shelter myself from all reproaches on your part in your kindness and generosity."

"Thanks, thanks, dearest Clémence," replied the count, pressing her to his heart; "this is, indeed, balm after such a day as this: but I think, my Clémence, when you hear all, you will yourself exculpate me from blame, though I fear that the charge of ingratitude which others may bring against me will never be done away in the less generous minds of the world in general without a terrible sacrifice. You, I know, Clémence, will believe every word I tell you."

"Oh, every word!" she exclaimed; "to doubt you, Albert, were to doubt truth itself."

"Well, then, believe me, Clémence," he said, "when I tell you, that till this morning, till this very morning, I had not the slightest idea whatsoever that my liberation was attributable to the king. Not only I, but all my domestics, every attendant that I have, my man Riquet himself, all believed that it was through an artifice of his that I had been set at liberty. Had I thought otherwise, upon my word, my first act would have been to fly to Versailles to express my thanks, whatever my after conduct might have been."

He then explained to her everything that had taken place, and the mistake under which he had himself laboured throughout.

"What confirmed me in the belief that the whole of Riquet's story was perfectly correct," he said, "was the fact that Besmaux, when he set me at liberty, observed that the order under which he did it was not quite in the usual form, together with some remarks that he made upon there being no carriage sent for me with the order."

"Alas! alas!" cried Clémence, wringing her hands, "it was my weakness; it was my foolish fears and anxiety that produced all this mischief. Listen to my tale now, Albert, and forgive me, forgive me for what I have done."

She then related to her lover almost all that had taken place between the king, herself, and Madame de Maintenon. We say almost, because she did not relate the whole; but, though Albert of Morseiul saw it, he divined, from what she did tell, that there were matters which she was bound not to divulge. Perhaps he divined the important truth itself; and, at all events, he did not love her a bit the less for a concealment which had no want of confidence in it.

"On the following morning," she said, "at the hour that the king had appointed, I did not fail to be in attendance. I found him writing; but it was soon over, and he handed me the paper, saying, 'There, lady, we have judged the cause that you have at heart as favourably as you judged ours last night. Tell him,' he added, 'when you see him, that—though we cannot alter the strict laws which we have found it necessary to make for his sake—we will grant him all that may reasonably make him happy, either in our own land or in another!'"

"And I have borne arms against him," cried the count, clasping his arms together.

"Yet hear me out, Albert," continued Clémence, "for the fault is mine. The order was for your immediate liberation. I took it eagerly, thanked the king, and retired, well knowing that it ought to be countersigned by Louvois, and sent through his office. But, during the evening before, on the occasion of something that was said, he gave me such a fiendlike look of revenge, that I knew he would seek your destruction, if not mine. I was well aware, too, that in many an instance he has interrupted the king's clemency or his bounty; and weakly, most weakly, I sent the order without his signature, ay, and without a moment's delay, by a servant belonging to the Duc de Rouvré. Thus, thus it was, that I, in my eagerness for your safety, have plunged you into new dangers; dangers from which, alas! I fear that there is scarcely a possible means of escape."

The count looked down upon the ground for a moment, and then replied, "I will write to the king myself, Clémence. It is very possible that he will not even

read the letter of a rebel with arms in his hand. But still it will be a satisfaction to me to do so. I must first get to the seaside, however, in order that I may place poor Riquet in security; for, were the tale told and he afterward discovered, I fear that no tortures would be considered too horrible to punish the daring act that he committed."

"I, too, will write," replied Clémence. "I will write and tell the whole to one, who, though she will refuse at first, I know, to do anything in our behalf, yet will not fail, calmly and quietly, to labour in our favour, thinking that she owes something to me. I will tell her the whole; I will tell her distinctly, Albert; and, if you will procure it for me, I will send her even the forged order that you mention, with the attestation of the man who brought it back from Paris."

Albert of Morseiul pressed her to his heart, and she added, "At all events, Albert, we shall be able to fly. We are now not far from the sea; ships can easily be procured, and we may be happy in another land."

Albert of Morseiul kissed her cheek for his only reply; but his heart was sad, and he could scarcely command even a smile to countenance the false hope she had expressed. His own determinations were taken, his own resolutions formed; but he thought it better and more kind not to make them known to Clémence de Marly till the moment arrived for putting them in execution.

While they were yet speaking, the attendant again came into the room to inform the count that three persons waited below to see him; and, on going down, he found Riquet, with one of the Protestants attached to the Marquis du Bar, and a gentleman who appeared to be an inferior officer in the royal service. The two latter instantly stepped forward when he appeared.

"Monsieur du Bar," said the Protestant soldier, "has sent you this gentleman, bearing a flag of truce from the Chevalier d'Evran. He carries a letter to yourself, and a letter to the lady from Thouars."

The count bowed to the stranger, and begged to see the letter to himself. It was simply addressed to the Count de Morseiul, and he opened it with some emotion, for it was strange to see the hand of Louis d'Evran writing to him as from one adversary to another. The style and tone of the letter, however, though it was very short, were precisely as if nothing had occurred to in-

terrupt their intimacy, or array them hostilely against each other. It ran,

"DEAR ALBERT,

"I write to you simply to know whether I am to regard the communication made to me on your part by an English gentleman, Sir Thomas Cecil, as formal and definitive, as I must be made aware of that fact before I can tramsmit it to the court. I trust and hope that good results may proceed from it: but you must not forget that it is an awful risk. For my part, I will do my best to quiet the province with as little harshness as possible, and with that object I accepted, or, rather, may say, solicited this command. In every respect, however, my duty must be done to the king, and shall be so done to the utmost. You never in your life fought better than you did this morning. Your defence of the heights was quite a Turenne affair; but you made a mistake in your morning movement to the left, which showed me your flank. Perhaps, however, you had some reason for it, for I think there was a fresh corps came up towards the close of the affair. Look to yourself, dear Albert, for be you sure that I shall give you no breathing time; and so God speed you!

"LOUIS D'EVRAN.

"Post Scriptum.—I find myself called upon by my duty to require you formally to send back la belle Clémence to her good friend De Rouvré, and to address a letter to her upon the subject of her return."

The count had read this epistle with a thoughful and a somewhat frowning brow. It was quite characteristic of the Chevalier d'Evran, but yet there was something in it that did not please him. He turned, however, to the officer courteously, saying,

"The Chevalier d'Evran notifies to me that he has sent a letter to Mademoiselle de Marly, and seems to leave it to me to deliver it. I would rather, however, that you did so yourself, if that lady will permit me to introduce you to her, when you can bear her answer from her own mouth. Riquet," he said, "go up and inquire whether Mademoiselle de Marly will grant this gentleman a few minutes' audience."

A short pause ensued, for Clémence hesitated for some time. At length, however, Riquet returned with an answer in the affirmative, and the count led the officer to her presence.

"I am commanded, madame," said the stranger, "by Monsieur le Chevalier d'Evran, lieutenant-general of the province, to deliver you this letter, and to say that, at any time to-morrow which you will name, he will send a proper carriage and attendants to convey you back to the town of Thouars, from which he understands that you were forcibly carried away some nights ago."

Clémence merely bowed her head, and held out her hand for the letter, which she opened and read. A faint smile came over her countenance as she proceeded, and when she had done she handed the epistle to her lover, asking, "What shall I do or say?"

"Nay, I can give you no advice," replied the count. "In this matter, Clémence, you must act by your own judgment: advice from me, situated as you are now, would bear somewhat the character of dictation. Do you wish me to read the letter?"

"Certainly," she replied. "My mind will be easily made up as to the answer."

The count then proceeded to read the letter, which was merely one of form; and began,

"MADEMOISELLE,

"I am urged by Monsieur le Duc de Rouvré, and feel it a part of my duty, to apply to you immediately to return to the care and protection of that gentleman and the duchess, under whose charge and guardianship you have been placed by the king. Although we are fully informed that you were carried away from the town of Thouars without your own consent and approbation, we feel sure, from the high character and reputation of the Count de Morseiul, though now unfortunately in open rebellion, that he will be most anxious you should return, and will do all that he can to facilitate the arrangements for that purpose. Such being the case, let me exhort you, mademoiselle, to make all haste to quit the camp of a body of men in open insurrection, and to place yourself under the protection of legitimate authority.

"I have the honour to be,
"Mademoiselle,
"Your devoted servant,
"LOUIS D'EVRAN."

The count returned the letter with no other comment than, "It is strange;" and Clémence paused for a mo-

ment, gazing upon the back of the letter, but evidently occupied by deep thought.

She then turned to the officer, who had remained standing, and said, "I will not detain you, sir, to write, as my answer must be merely what the Chevalier d'Evran expects. You will inform him—notwithstanding that it may seem bold of me to say so—that although I was certainly not brought here with my consent, I nevertheless am here by my consent; and as I have long been disposed to return to that faith in which I was originally instructed, and have for some time embraced it upon sincere conviction, I cannot consent to place myself in a situation where the exercise of the reformed religion will be denied to me; but must, on the contrary, remain with those who will protect and support me in my adherence to what I consider the only pure and true faith."

"In short, madam," replied the officer, "I am to tell the chevalier that you are a Huguenot?"

"Exactly, sir," replied Clémence; "and that I have been so for some time."

The officer showed an inclination to pause, and to add something to what had been said; but the count stopped him.

"You are, sir," he said, "I think, but the bearer of a letter; nothing in that has been shown us giving you at all the title of an envoy. You have therefore but to bear back the reply which this lady has given."

"And your own, sir," said the officer, "which I have not received."

"It is as simple as her own, sir," replied the count. "Assure the Chevalier d'Evran of my best regard; tell him he may trust entirely and fully to the proposal made to him on my part to which he alludes, as far, at least, as I myself am concerned. In respect, however, to what will satisfy the other leaders, who are in arms for the maintenance of their just liberties, and for the attainment of immunity in worshipping God according to their own consciences, he must deal with themselves. In that I cannot and do not interfere, and have only to support them with my sword and counsels till such time as they have obtained their rights, or are satisfied with any arrangements proposed."

"I shall not fail," replied the officer, "to convey these messages distinctly;" and, thus saying, he bowed

and left the room, followed by the Count of Morseiul, who, giving directions that his eyes should be properly bandaged, placed him in the hands of the Protestant soldier who had accompanied him, and of the guard which was waiting without. He then made a sign to Riquet to follow him up stairs, and bade his valet repeat to Clémence de Marly all that had occurred respecting his liberation from the Bastile.

"And now, Riquet," he said, when the man had given a much more straightforward and decided statement than he usually made, "it is my intention, as soon as possible, to lay the whole of these facts before the king, feeling it due to my own honour to show him that I have not been so ungrateful as he thinks. As the act, however, which you have committed might prove very dangerous to you if you should fall into the hands of the Catholic party, I shall take care, before I give this account, that you have an opportunity of seeking refuge in another land. I know that all countries are to you alike; and I will ensure that you shall be provided with full means of obtaining for yourself comfort and repose."

"Sir," said the man, with some feeling, "all countries, as you say, are to me alike. But such is not the case with regard to all masters. Please God, I will never serve another but yourself. If you quit the country, I will quit it with you: if you remain, I will remain. I am already—am I not?—in arms against the crown. I am just as much a rebel, riding after you from place to place, and every now and then firing a musket when I think nobody sees me, as if I were at the head of the whole business, and people called it the rebellion of Riquet. You may, therefore, lay the whole statement before the king if you please, and I will myself write down the plain facts in fewer words than a paper drawn up by a notary's clerk without a fee. I have no fear, sir, of gathering together upon my shoulders a few more stray crimes and misdemeanours. That does not lie in the way of my cowardice. My neck is thin and long, and whether it be the axe or the cord that has to do with it, it will neither give the cord nor the edge much trouble; while I have always one consolation, which is, that if the experiment of hanging should prove disagreeable, it cannot be tried upon me twice. I will go and get the paper directly, sir, which the man Peter

brought back again. I will put down all his sayings and doings, and all my own; and the king, who is said to have a high taste in all branches of skill, ought to declare, when he sees the order for your liberation which I manufactured, that there is not a piece of mosaic like it in all Versailles, and grant me a high reward for such a specimen of dexterity in my art."

"I fear you deceive yourself, Riquet," replied the count; but the man shook his head. "No, sir, I do not," he said, "I assure you. All things considered and well weighed, I do not think that I run a bit more risk by this matter being told to the king than if it never reached his ears."

Thus saying, he left the room, and Albert of Morseiul turned to other and sweeter thoughts. "Dear, dear Clémence," he said, gazing tenderly upon her, "you have now, indeed, chosen your part as I could expect Clémence to do; and, by the words that you have this day spoken, you have swept away every feeling in my bosom that could give me a moment's pain."

"Hush, Albert, hush," said Clémence. "I know the kind of pain to which you allude. But you should never have entertained it. Love, Albert—the love of a heart such as yours, ought never to doubt."

"But, dear Clémence," replied the count, "is it possible for love to be satisfied while there is anything touching its affection concealed?"

Clémence smiled, but shook her head; and as she was about to reply, a single musket-shot was heard disturbing the tranquillity which had fallen over the camp. The count listened, and his ear caught the distant sounds of "Alerte! Alerte!" followed almost immediately afterward by a more general discharge of musketry. Clémence had turned very pale.

"Fear not, dear Clémence," he said, "this is merely a night attack upon some of our quarters, which will soon be repelled, for I have taken sufficient precautions. I will see what it is, and return immediately."

Thus saying, he left her, and Clémence, with a heart full of strong and mingled emotions, leaned her head upon the little table and wept.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NIGHT ATTACK.

Particular orders had been issued by the Count de Morseiul that no offence should be given to the religious feelings of the Catholics; and, in issuing his commands for the occupation of the little chapel at the bottom of the hill, he had directed that the building appropriated to the ceremonies of the church should not be entered, except in case of necessity; the porch and the sacristy being taken possession of, and the piece of consecrated ground around it, which was strongly walled, affording a sort of fort, in which the men constructed huts or set up their tents.

They were accustomed, indeed, to abide in the forest, and found no difficulty or discomfort in taking their night's rest where they were. Three fine spreading yew-trees, of unknown age and immense thickness, afforded a pleasant shelter to many; and wine, which had been found plentifully in the hamlet above, as well as in a little town at no great distance, flowed liberally among a body of men who had fought hard and marched long since the morning.

There was a great difference, however, to be remarked between them and the religious insurgents of more northern countries; for though both the sterner fanaticism which characterized Scotland and England not long before, and the wilder imaginations and fanciful enthusiasms of the far south were occasionally to be found in individuals, the great mass were entirely and decidedly French, possessing the character of light and somewhat thoughtless gayety, so peculiar to that indifferent and laughter-loving nation.

Thus, though they had prayed earnestly, after having fought with determination in the cause which to them was the cause of conscience, they were now quite ready to forget both prayer and strife, till some other cause should reproduce the enthusiasm which gave vigour to either.

They sat in groups, then, round fires of an old apple-

tree or two which they had pulled down, and drank the wine, procured, it must be acknowledged, by various different means; but though they sang not, as perhaps they might have done under other circumstances, nothing else distinguished them from any other party of gay French soldiers carousing after a laborious day.

Herval and Virlay, as the commanders of that peculiar body, had taken possession of the little sacristy, and made themselves as comfortable therein as circumstances admitted. They were both somewhat inclined to scoff at and do dishonour to everything connected with the ceremonies of the church of Rome; but the commands of the count were still sufficiently potent with them to prevent them from indulging such feelings; and they remained conversing both over the events of the day, and also over past times, without any farther insult to the Roman Catholic faith than merely a scornful glance towards the vestments of the prie ts, the rich purple and lace of which excited their indignation even more than many articles of faith.

Several hours of the evening had thus worn away, and their conversation, far from being like that of their men without, was sad, dark, and solemn. The proximity of the convent had recalled to the mind of Herval the situation of her he had loved; and though they talked much of her fate, yet, by some peculiar accident, which we shall not attempt to explain, that subject, dark and painful as it was, did not disturb his mental faculties as might have been expected. It produced, however, both on him and on Virlay, that dark and profound gloom, from which actions of a fierce and cruel nature more frequently have birth, than even from the keen and active excitement of strife and anger.

"Ay, and your child, too, Virlay," said Herval: "it is strange, is it not, that we have not yet found her? I should not wonder if she were in this very convent up here upon the hill. The count will not surely want you to leave it unsearched when we march to-morrow."

"It matters little whether he do or not," replied Virlay. "Search it I will, and that as soon as it be gray daylight. My child I will have if she be in France: and oh, Herval, how often, when we are near a monastery or a convent, do I long to put a torch to the gate of it, and burn it all to the ground!"

"No, no," replied Herval, "that would not do; you would be burning the innocent with the guilty."

"Ay, true," answered Virlay, "and thus I might burn my own poor child."

"Ay, or my Claire," replied Herval; "that is to say, if she had been living, poor thing! You know they shot her, Paul. They shot her to the heart. But, as I was saying, you might burn your own poor child, or the child of many a man that loves his as well as you do yours."

"I wonder if she be in there," said Paul Virlay. "Why should I not take ten or twelve men up, and make them open the gates and see?"

"Better wait till day," replied Herval; "better wait till day, Virlay. They have thousands of places that you might miss in the night. Hark! some one knocked at the door. Who is it? Come in!"

"Only a poor old woman," replied a voice from without, half opening the door, "only a poor old woman soliciting charity and peace;" and a minute after, with timid and shaking steps, a woman, dressed in a gray gown like the portress of some convent, gradually drew herself within the doorway, and crossed herself twenty times in a minute as she gazed upon the two Protestants sitting with the gloom of their late conversation still upon their faces.

"What do you want, old woman?" said Herval, sharply. "Don't you know that you risk a great deal by coming out at this hour? My men are not lambs, nor wood-pigeons, nor turtle-doves."

"Oh, Heaven bless you, sir, I know that," replied the old lady, "and in a great fright I am too: but, after all, I'm the least in a fright in the convent; and Sister Bridget—when she came to me with her teeth chattering in her head just after the men had come round and knocked at the door, and swore they would burn the place to the ground before morning—she talked so much about my courage that I thought I had some, and agreed to come down; and then, when she had got me out, she locked the wicket, and vowed I should not come in till I had been down to do the errand. So I came quietly on, and through the little gate, and got out of the way of the great gate, because I saw there were a number of fires there; and when I saw a light under the sacristy

door I said to myself, the officers will be in there, and they will be gentler and kinder—"

"Well, and what was your errand when you did come?" demanded Herval, sharply.

"Why, sir," replied the old woman, "we have a young lady among us—" Paul Virlay started suddenly on his feet—"and a sweet young lady she is too," continued the poor old nun, "as sweet a young lady and as pretty as ever I set my eyes on, and she told our good lady mother, the superior—"

"What is her name, woman?" cried Paul Virlay, advancing upon the poor sister, who retreated before him, but who still, with woman's intuitive tact in such things, saw that she had got the advantage. "What is her name, woman! It is my child! Oh, Herval, it is my child!"

"So she said to my lady mother," continued the good nun, as soon as she could make her voice heard, "so she said to my lady mother, that she was sure that if her father was in the Count of Morseiul's camp, he would come up in a minute with a guard of men to protect the convent, especially if he knew that we had been kind and good to her."

"Where is she? Take me to her," cried Paul Virlay. "Woman, take me to my child. I will bring a guard, I will protect you. Where is my poor Margette?"

"Are you her father, then, sir?" demanded the old woman. "Is your name Monsieur Virlay?"

"Yes, yes, yes," cried he, impetuously: "I am Paul Virlay, woman."

"Then, sir," she replied, "if you will bring up a guard and undertake to protect the convent, you can have the young lady, only pray—"

"I will take a guard," cried he; "do not be afraid, woman! Nobody shall hurt you. I will take a guard," he continued, speaking to Herval, as if in excuse for taking away part of the men from an important post, "I will take a guard for fear there should be men up there, and they should want to keep Margette. The count said, too, that the only reason he did not occupy the convent was, that he did not like to disturb the nuns. Now, when they ask it themselves, I may well go. You can send for me in a moment if I be wanted."

"There is no fear of that," replied Herval; "go, in God's name, and see your child."

Paul Virlay hastened away, drawing the old woman by the arm after him, while Herval remained behind, shaking his head with a melancholy motion, and saying, "He will see his child again, and she will cling round his neck and kiss his cheek, and they will be happy: but I shall never see my poor Claire as long as I linger on upon this dull world." He paused, and, leaning his head upon his hand, plunged into melancholy thought.

There was a little bustle without while Virlay chose out such men as he thought he could best depend upon, and then that part of the camp did not exactly sink into tranquillity, but the general noise of the party was less. There was still loud talking among the men, and wine seemed to have done its work too, as in one or two instances, especially near the little sacristy, where the wilder and less tractable of Herval's band had been placed to be under his own eye, the psalms with which the evening had begun had deviated into gayer songs; and he sat and listened gravely while one of the men near the door carolled to his comrades a light ditty.

SONG.

In the deep woods when I was young,
Sly the happy, happy sunshine stole
Under the green leaves, where the birds sung,
And merry, merry music filled the whole;
For Mary sat there,
And all her care
Was to outsing the linnet—Dear little soul!

Through the long grass then would I steal,
In music and sunshine to have my part.
That no one was coming seemed she to feel,
Till the warm kiss made the sweet maid start.
Then would she smile
Through her blushes the while,
And vow she did not love me—Dear little heart!

The sunshine is stealing still through the trees,
Still in the green woods the gay birds sing,
But those leaves have fall'n by the wintry breeze,
And many birds have dropped that were then on the wing,
All, all alone,
Beneath the cold stone,
Lies my sweet Mary!—Poor little thing!

Herval wept bitterly. It was one of the songs of his own youth, which he had himself sung in many a joyous hour: a song which was the master-key to visions

of early happiness, and touching in its light emptiness upon all the most painful themes of thought. The song, the dear song of remembered happiness, sung at that moment of painful bereavement, was like a soldier's child springing to meet its father returning from the wars, and unconsciously plunging the arrow-head deeper into the wound from which he suffered.

As he thus sat and wept, he was suddenly roused by the sound of a single musket shot at no great distance, and, starting up, he listened, when loud cries from the other side of the chapel caught his ear, and he rushed out. All was dark; not a star was in the sky; but the air was free from vapour, and looking towards the spot from which the sounds proceeded, he could see a dark body moving rapidly along the side of the hill, beyond the enclosure round the chapel. The shot that had been fired was not returned, and hurrying up to the spot as fast as possible, he clearly distinguished a column of infantry marching along at a quick pace in that direction, and evidently seeking to force its way between the convent and the chapel. There was none but a single sentry in that direction—the man who had discharged his musket—and Herval exclaimed in agony, "Good God, how is this? They have been suffered to pass the morass and the stream!"

"I fired as soon as I saw them," replied the man; "but Virlay carried off all the men from down below there, and marched them up to the convent."

Herval struck his clinched hand against his brow, exclaiming, "Fool that I was to suffer him!" Then rushing back as fast possible, he called all the rest of his troop to arms, and with the mere handful that assembled in a moment, rushed out by the gate through which the portress of the convent had entered, and attempted to cast himself in the way of the head of the enemy's column.

It was in vain, however, that he did so. A company of light infantry faced about, and met his first furious attack with a tremendous fire, while the rest of the force moved on. The sound, however, of the combat thus commenced, roused the rest of the camp, and the Count of Morseiul, himself on foot and at the head of a considerable body of the most determined Huguenots, was advancing, ere five minutes were over, not to repel the attack of the enemy—for, by what he saw, Albert of

Morseiul instantly became aware that, his camp being forced at the strongest point, it was in vain to hope that the king's army could be repulsed—but at least to cover the retreat of his troops with as little loss as possible.

All the confusion of a night combat now took place; the hurrying up by the dull and doubtful light; the cowardice that shows itself in many men when the eye of day is not upon them; the rashness and emotion of others, who indeed are not afraid, but only agitated; the mistakes of friends for foes and foes for friends; the want of all knowledge of which party is successful in those points where the strife is going on at a distance.

As far as it was possible in such circumstances, Albert of Morseiul restored some degree of order and regularity to the defence. Relying almost altogether upon his infantry, he held the royalists in check, while he sent orders to some of the inferior commanders to evacuate the camp in as orderly a manner as possible, gathering the horse together upon the brow of the hill, so as to be ready, when the occasion served, to charge and support the infantry. His particular directions were despatched to Monsieur du Bar to maintain his post to the last, as the count well knew that the forces of the Chevalier d'Evran were sufficient to attack the Huguenot camp on both sides at once.

Such, indeed, had been the plan of the chevalier; but it was not followed correctly. He had placed himself at the head of the attack upon the side of the convent, as by far the most hazardous and difficult. The officer who commanded the other attack was a man of considerable skill, but he had with him the intendant of the province; a personage as weak and presumptuous as he was cruel and bigoted: and insisting upon it that the officer at the head of the troops had made a mistake in regard to the way, he entangled them in the morass, and delayed him for more than an hour.

Had the attack on that side succeeded as well as that on the side of the chapel, the little force of the Huguenots must have been absolutely annihilated; and had the attack there even commenced at the same time that it began on the other side, the disasters of that night must have been tenfold greater than they proved. As it was, the Count de Morseiul had time to offer at least some resistance, and to organize his retreat. A horse was soon brought to him; and perceiving, by the firing on the

flank of the enemy's column, that Herval and his men were striving desperately to retrieve the error which had been committed, he called up a small body of horse, and, making a gallant charge at their head, drove back some of the infantry companies that interposed between himself and the chapel, and opened a communication with Herval and the men. Giving orders to the officer in command of the horse to make another rapid charge, but not to entangle his men too far, the count himself rode down to Herval, to ascertain what was proceeding in that quarter. He found the man covered with blood and gunpowder, raging like a wolf in the midst of a flock.

"Herval," he exclaimed, "a great mistake has been committed. A handful of men could have defended that bridge against an army."

"I know it, count, I know it," replied Herval. "I have been a fool, Virlay has been a madman. I should never have trusted him by himself. It is time I should die."

"It is rather time, Herval," replied the count, "that you should live and exert your good sense to remedy what is amiss. Do you not see that by spending your strength here you are doing no good, and losing your men every minute? Gather them together: quick, and follow me. We want support, there, upon the hill. The chapel is untenable now. Quick; lose not a moment. Good God!" he said, "they are not charging as I ordered, and in another moment we shall be cut off!"

It was indeed as he said. The young officer to whom he had given the command was shot through the head at the very moment that he was about to execute it. The charge was not made; the body which had been driven back by the count were rallied by the Chevalier d'Evran; the infantry of the Huguenots, which had been guarding the heights, wavered before the superior force brought against them; and by the time that Herval's men were collected, a large body of foot interposed between the Count de Morseiul and the spot where he had left his troops. Nothing remained but to lead round Herval's little force by the hollow-way on the edge of the morass, and climbing the steeper part of the hill by the road that led to the little hamlet and farm-houses, to rejoin the principal body of the Protestants there, and to make one more effort to hold the hamlet against the advancing force of the royalists till Monsieur du Bar had time to draw off his troops.

Ere the count, however, could reach the ground where he had fixed his own headquarters, both the infantry and cavalry which he had left had been driven back, and, by a terrible oversight, instead of retiring upon the hamlet, had taken the way to the right, along which the other bodies of troops had been ordered to retreat. The royalists thus, at the time that the count arrived, were pouring in among the cottages and farmhouses; and when he reached the little knoll immediately behind the house where he left Clémence de Marly, he was instantly assailed by a tremendous fire from behind the walls of the courtyard and the lower windows of the house itself. He had no troops with him but Herval's band, and a small body of foot which arrived at that moment to his assistance from the Marquis du Bar, and he paused for an instant in agony of heart, knowing and feeling that it was utterly hopeless to attempt to retake the farmhouse, and enable Clémence to effect her escape. The grief and pain of a whole life seemed summed up in that one moment.

"I will not," he cried, in the rashness of despair, "I will not leave her without an effort."

Herval was by his side. "Sir," he said, "I must not live over this night. Let us advance at all risks."

The count gave the order, and the men advanced gallantly, though the enemy's fire was terrible. They were actually scaling the wall of the courtyard, when suddenly a fire was opened upon them from the houses and walls on either side. Herval fell over amid the enemy, the count's horse dropped at once under him, and he felt himself drawn forcibly out from beneath the dying animal, and carried along by the men in full retreat from that scene of slaughter.

"Here is a horse, count, here is a horse," cried a voice near him. "Mount quick, and oh take care of my poor girl. She is on with the troops before. I have lost you the battle, and know what must come of it."

The count turned and saw Paul Virlay by his side; but, before he could reply, the man left the bridle in his hand and rushed into the midst of the enemy.

Springing on the charger's back, the count gazed round him. Herval's band was all in confusion, but beginning to rally upon the body of infantry sent by Du Bar. The hamlet was in full possession of the enemy:

the only means of communication between Du Bar and the troops that were retreating was along the hillside, Albert of Morseiul saw that if he did not maintain that line, his gallant friend would be cut off, and, for the moment, casting from his mind all the other bitter anxieties that preyed upon it, he hastened to occupy a little rising ground, terribly exposed, indeed, to the enemy's fire, but which would protect the flank of his friend's little corps while they joined the rest who were in retreat. That he was just in time was proved to Albert of Morseiul by the sound of a loud cannonade, which commenced from the very direction of Du Bar's quarters; and, sending that officer orders to retreat directly, he remained, for twenty minutes, repelling every charge of the enemy; and, by the example of his own desperate courage and perfect self-command, seeming to inspire his men with resolution unconquerable. In the mean time the Marquis du Bar retreated before the other body of royalists which had now come up, and, having seen his men in comparative safety, rode back, with a small body of horse, to aid the count in covering the retreat. The royalists now, however, had gained their object; the camp of the Huguenots was in their hands; the slaughter on both sides had been dreadful, considering the short space of time which the strife had lasted; the country beyond was difficult and defensible, and the order for stopping farther pursuit was given as soon as no more resistance was made in the Huguenot camp.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ROYALIST CAMP.

"I AM astonished, sir, that you should presume to interfere," said the Chevalier d'Evran, speaking to the intendant of the province, whom he had found on riding down to the post of the second in command, in order to ascertain what was the cause of the attack having been so long delayed in that quarter. "I am astonished that you should presume to interfere at all. The weak

gentlemen who have hitherto been commanding in this country have been indulgent to such insolence: but you will find very different consequences if you attempt to practise it upon me."

"Insolence, sir! Insolence!" exclaimed the intendant, foaming with rage and mortified pride at being thus addressed in the presence of many hundreds of witnesses. "Insolence in me! Why, who am I, sir? Am I not the intendant of justice, police, and finance in this province?"

"Yes, sir, insolence!" replied the Chevalier d'Evran. "You are the intendant of justice, police, and finance; but, before I assumed the command of the king's forces in this province, you yourself had required martial law to be proclaimed, so that you not only put every one else under the authority of the military power, but yourself also; and, by heavens, if you stare in my face in that manner one moment longer, I will have you hanged up to yonder tree. Bring a drum here," he continued, "and summon four officers from the regiments of Lorraine and Berry. We will soon see who is to command here."

The unfortunate intendant turned as pale as ashes; for the gallantry and decision which the Chevalier d'Evran had shown since he assumed the command were of a very impressive character, and gave weight to his threats. The officer who had laid the complaint against him, however, now interfered. "For God's sake, general," he said, "have mercy upon this poor man, and consider what will be the result of calling a drum-head court-martial."

"I should always be very willing, sir," replied the chevalier, drawing up his fine person to its full height, "I should always be very willing to attend to your recommendations; but, sir, in the course of this night and the preceding day, I have obtained two great and signal successes over this body of insurgents; and I think that those successes will fully justify me in the eyes of the king for punishing, with such authority as is vested in my hands, the person to whom we may attribute that our success was not complete, by the annihilation of the Huguenot party in the province. If the intendant chooses immediately to make a humble apology for what has passed, and to promise in the most solemn manner never to interfere in any one thing in my camp

or under my command, I will so far overlook the matter for the time as not to carry this extreme measure into execution against him at once. But, in the mean time, I will hold it suspended over his head, and, if required, execute it on the moment."

The apologies and promises were as full and ample as the chevalier could demand; and, leaving strict orders that the worthy intendant should be kept in a sort of honourable surveillance in the camp, the chevalier turned his horse's head, and rode back with his staff towards the village, smiling slightly over what had just passed, for, to say the truth, he had been acting a part much more harsh and severe than he was inclined to pursue in reality. The truth is, that after the engagement of the preceding morning, the intendant had shown some disposition to take possession of one or two prisoners that had fallen into the royalists' hands, for the purpose of employing the rack and the wheel in their conversion; but the chevalier, having determined from the first to put a stop to such measures, had evaded all discussion for the time, very sure that, ere long, the intendant would give him an opportunity of depriving him, at least for the time, of all authority in the province.

The smile, however, was soon succeeded by a somewhat more anxious expression; for, knowing as he did that Clémence de Marly was in the camp of the Huguenots, he was not a little apprehensive of what might have been her fate in the course of the struggle of that night. He had given particular instructions regarding her, however; had made it so fully understood that he would have no unnecessary bloodshed, and had exhorted his troops and inferior officers so eloquently to regard the Protestants merely as erring brothers as soon as the arms were out of their hands, that he felt little or no apprehension of any excesses being committed after the engagement. As soon, then, as he had ascertained that Mademoiselle de Marly was in the farmhouse on the top of the hill, and was perfectly safe, he contented himself with sending a message to her, telling her that he would visit her in the morning, and begging her, in the mean time, to put her mind completely at ease. He then proceeded to investigate the amount of his own loss and that of the Huguenots. Nearly an equal number had fallen on each side; but the army of the Chevalier d'Evran could afford to lose a thousand

men without any serious diminution of its strength, while the same loss on the part of the Protestant force reduced it in a lamentable degree.

"Now," thought the chevalier, when he heard the result of the inquiries that he caused to be made, "if I can but drive Albert of Morseiul to the sea, and force him to embark with the most determined of his sect, while the others lay down their arms and conform, we shall do very well. These battles were necessary to dishearten the desperate fellows, and to give me power to do them good and treat them mercifully. But we may change our system now, and press them hard without losing the lives of gallant men. What this old Cecil tells me of the mistake about the liberation, may, if properly shown, mitigate a part of the king's anger towards Albert; but it will never do the whole, and I fear flight is his only resource. This offer that he has made, however, stands desperately in the way, and yet it must be communicated to the king. I dare not conceal it."

While he thus thought, sitting in the room of one of the cottages, information was brought him that one of the wounded Huguenots, who was kept with other prisoners in a barn hard by, was very anxious to see him.

"I will come immediately," he replied to the officer; and then sitting down, he wrote a brief despatch to Louvois, in which he detailed all the events that had occurred; but, at the same time, knowing the views of the minister, he intimated that the only means of keeping the extent of the insurrection from the king's knowledge, and from general publicity throughout the whole of Europe, would be to give him the full power of pardoning all men on laying down their arms. He begged the minister to believe that he had not the slightest desire whatsoever that the little services he had performed should be reported to Louis; but, at the same time, he pointed out that those services could not be ultimately beneficial, unless the power that he demanded was granted to him, and all other authority in the province superseded for at least one month. He felt very sure that this would be granted by Louvois, as that minister had become greatly alarmed, and had openly expressed to the young commander his anxiety lest the extent of the revolt which had taken place in consequence of measures he had advised should ruin him for ever with the king. The chevalier trusted also—although he was

obliged, in the end of his epistle, to state the proposal made by the Count de Morseiul—that the powers granted by the minister would be such as to enable him to serve that nobleman.

When this despatch was concluded and sent off, he demanded where the person was who had wished to see him, and was led to a small outhouse close by the farm in which Clémence abode. The door, which was padlocked, and at which a sentry appeared, was opened to give him admission, and he found stretched upon piles of straw on the floor of the building two or three men, apparently in a dying state, and another seated in a somewhat extraordinary attitude in one corner of the shed. The sight was very horrible; the straw in many parts was stained with blood, and anguish was legibly written on the pale countenances of the dying.

"Who was the prisoner that wished to speak with me?" said the chevalier, going in; but they each answered by claiming to be heard: one demanding a little water, one asking to be taken into the open air, and one who, before the words had fully passed his lips, lay a corpse upon the straw, asking pardon and life, and promising obedience and conversion. The chevalier ordered everything that could make them comfortable to be supplied as far as possible, adding some sharp reproaches to his own people for the state in which he found the wounded; and he then said, "But there was some one who, as I understood, wished to speak with me more particularly."

"It was I," said the man who was sitting down in the corner, at once starting up into the likeness of Jerome Riquet; while at the same moment another faint voice from the farther part of the building said, "It was I, general. I told the officer who came here that I would fain see you about the Count de Morseiul."

"Riquet," said the chevalier, "I will attend to you presently. You seem well and unhurt; answer me three questions, and I may say something that will satisfy you in return. Have you been engaged in this unfortunate business simply as the servant of the Count de Morseiul?"

"As nothing else, upon my word, sir," replied Riquet.

"Are you a Catholic or a Protestant?"

"As Catholic as salt fish on a Friday," replied Riquet. "Surrounded on all sides by heretics, I was at one time

in great fear for myself, like a man in a city where there is a plague. But bless you, sir, I found it was not catching, and here I am more Catholic than ever."

"Have you, then, in any instance, borne arms in this war?" demanded the chevalier.

"No, on my honour, chevalier," replied the valet. "No arms have I borne except a shaving-brush, a razor, a pair of tweezers, and a toothpick."

"Well, then," replied the chevalier, "I can promise you pardon; but, remember, you are a prisoner on parole. Do you give me your word that you will not try to escape?"

"Lord bless you, sir," replied the man, "I would not escape for the world. I am with the winning side. You don't suppose Riquet's a fool, to go over to the poor devils that you're driving into the sea!"

"Scoundrel!" said a deep but faint voice from the other side of the building; and telling Riquet to bring the light with him, the chevalier advanced to the spot, where, stretched upon the straw, in the most remote corner of the shed, lay the unfortunate Armand Herval, dying from the effects of at least twenty wounds. As soon as the eyes of the wounded man fell upon Riquet, he exclaimed, angrily, "Get thee hence, traitor! Let me not see your face, scoundrel! To abandon thus your noble lord at the first moment of misfortune!"

"You mistake, monsieur," replied Riquet, quietly; "I am not a bit more of a scoundrel than you are, Monsieur Herval, nor, indeed, of a traitor either: every one serves his lord in his own way, Master Herval, that's all. You in your way, and I in mine. If you had waited a little to hear what I had to say to the chevalier, you would have seen that I was quite as ready to make sacrifices for my lord as yourself."

"Herval!" said the chevalier, as he listened to their conversation, "that name is surely familiar to me."

"Well it might be," answered Riquet; "for I dare say my lord must have told you, Monsieur le Chevalier. This man, or I am much mistaken, would have killed the king himself if my lord had not prevented him."

"Indeed!" demanded the chevalier. "Can we get any proof of this?"

"Proof, sir?" replied the dying man; "it was on that account I sent for you. The Count de Morseiul is ruined; and the cause of the reformed church is over; and

all this evil has happened through my fault. I have heard, too, that he has offered to surrender himself to the axe, in order to buy safety for the rest of us. But surely the king—let him be as great a tyrant as he may —will not murder the man that saved his life."

"The king, sir, is no tyrant," replied the chevalier, "but a generous and noble master to those who are obedient and loyal; even to the disobedient he is most merciful; and if this fact could be made known to him, and proved beyond all doubt, I feel perfectly convinced that he would not only pardon the Count de Morsieul for his past errors, but show him some mark of favour, in gratitude for what he has done."

"The king does know it," replied Herval, sharply; "the king must know it; for I have heard that the whole papers of Hatréaumont fell into the hands of Louvois; and I have myself seen that foul tiger's name written to an order for my arrest as one of Hatréaumont's accomplices."

"But that does not prove," replied the chevalier, "that either the king or Louvois knew of this act of the count's."

"It does prove it," replied the dying man, "for the only letter I ever wrote to Hatréaumont in my life was to tell him that I had failed in my purpose of killing the tyrant; that everything had gone fair till the Count de Morseiul came in between me and him, and declared that I shoud take his life first. I told him all, everything: how I got into the gardens of Varsailles at night, and hid under the terrace where the king walked alone; how yon babbling fool betrayed my purpose to the count, and he came and prevented me doing the deed I ought to have done, even if I had taken his life first. I told him all this, and I cursed the Count of Morseiul in my madness over again and again; and now the man whose life he saved is seeking to bring him to the block."

"This is extraordinary and important," said the chevalier: "I cannot believe that the king knows it. Louvois must have kept it from his ears. Will you make a deposition of this, my good fellow, as early to-morrow as we can get proper witnesses and a notary?"

"Early to-morrow?" said the man, faintly; "early to-morrow, chevalier? I shall never see a to-morrow. Now is your only moment, and as for witnesses, quick,

get paper, and pen, and ink. There is not half an hour's life in me. If you had come when first I sent, there would have been plenty of time. But now every moment is a loss."

"Quick, Riquet," cried the chevalier, "bid the officer at the door run to my quarters, and bring down pen, and ink, and paper, without a moment's delay."

Riquet lost no time, and the chevalier endeavoured as far as possible to keep Herval quiet till the means of writing were brought. The dying man would go on speaking, however, but with his voice becoming lower and lower, and his ideas evidently in some degree confused. Once or twice he spoke as if he were at Versailles, and in the presence of the king; then seemed as if he fancied himself conversing with Hatréaumont; and then again pronounced the name of Claire more than once, and talked of happiness. When Riquet and the officer returned, however, with the materials for writing, he had still strength and recollection enough to commence his declaration in a formal manner.

"I, Armand Herval," he said, "do hereby declare, and on the bed of death affirm most solemnly, that, had it not been that the Count de Morseiul prevented me, I would have shot the King of France, upon the terrace at Versailles, after the play, on the night before the arrest of the Chevalier de Rohan, and that all I said was perfectly true in a letter which was written by me to Monsieur de Hatréaumont, dated on the—I cannot recollect the day:" he added, in a lower tone, "it seems as if a mist had come over that part of my memory."

"Never mind," said the chevalier; "go on, my good friend, go on; the date is unimportant."

"Was it the twenty-fourth or the twenty-fifth," continued the man. "I cannot recollect for the life of me, your majesty. It's a short life, too. Mine will soon be spent, and Claire's is all gone—"

He spoke very faintly, indeed; and the chevalier said, "You forget, my friend, you forget. We were talking of the Count de Morseiul."

"Ah!" cried the man, with a greater effort, and starting up on the straw, "Ah, so we were. What a fool I am! Write it down, quick! Write it down, quick! But take your fingers off my throat! Take your fingers off my throat! I cannot speak if you stop my breath! What's the use of putting out the light? Why

do you put out the light? Oh, Heaven, it is death, it is death," and, falling back upon the straw, the strong frame shook for a moment, as if an ague had seized him, and then all was still.

The Chevalier d'Evran shut his teeth close, saying, "This is unfortunate. However, you are a witness, Riquet, to all that he said."

"Lord bless you, noble sir," replied the valet, "nobody will believe a word that I say. I should consider my character ruined for ever if there was anybody in all Europe that would believe me upon my oath."

"I had forgot," said the chevalier, dryly; "your character is in no danger, I believe, on that score. But my word will be believed, and my voice, at least, shall be heard."

"Well, sir," replied Riquet, perhaps a little piqued at the chevalier's reply, "let me add my voice too; for though they may believe me in nothing else, they may, perhaps, believe me in a confession which will go to twist my own neck. I wish to be sent to the king, sir; though, if you can find out when he is in a good humour, I should prefer it. But my object is to inform him that it was altogether my fault, and my foolishness, and my crime, that prevented the Count de Morseiul from going to Versailles as soon as he was liberated from the Bastile to throw himself at the king's feet. If it had not been for that aforesaid foolishness of mine, he would never have come hither, would never have led the rebels at all, and most likely, by this time, would have been as high in the king's good graces as ever."

"I have heard all this before," said the chevalier. "But are you positively resolved, my good friend, to go voluntarily and make confession of all these things? Do you remember the consequences? Do you think of the risks?"

"No, sir," replied Riquet, "I do quite the contrary. I try to forget them all as fast as possible, being resolved to go at any rate; and, therefore, judging that the less I think about risks and consequences, the better."

"By Heaven, thou art right," replied the chevalier, "and thou shalt have a bottle of Burgundy, if there be one in the camp, to keep warm thy philosophy. See, there is the gray of the morning coming in, and I may well go away satisfied with having found one man in

the world who is not so great a scoundrel as I thought him."

The chevalier returned to the hut in which he had established his quarters, and cast himself down for an hour's repose; but, before the daylight had been long in the sky, he was on foot again, at the door of the farmhouse which contained Clémence de Marly. He was immediately admitted; and, strange as it may seem, if the Count de Morseiul had witnessed that meeting, it would certainly have wrung his heart more than the loss of a great battle. The royalist commander advanced at once to his fair prisoner, and, putting his arms slightly round her, kissed her cheek without any apparent reluctance on her part; and her first exclamation was, "Oh, Louis, I am glad to see you safe! You know not how my heart is torn!"

"I dare say it is, my pretty Clémence," replied the chevalier, in his usual light tone; "but you, who have been doing nothing else but tearing other people's hearts for the last five years, must take your turn now. You have placed me in a terrible predicament, however, thoughtless girl," he added. "You are obstinate as an Arragonese mule about this matter of religion, and will not be contented till you have got yourself roasted in this world as preparatory to—"

"But tell me, Louis, tell me about him!" demanded Clémence. "Is he safe? Has he escaped from this awful night?"

"I suppose you mean Morseiul by *he* and *him*," said the chevalier; "and, if so, he is safe, as far as I know. He has escaped. That is to say, he has not been taken, thank God, though one time he was very near it; for, by the flash of the guns, I saw his face in the middle of our men: but I dare say now, Clémence, that you would a thousandfold rather have me killed than this heretic of yours?"

"Do not be unkind, Louis," replied Clémence; "I would, of course, rather have neither of you killed; but, now that you have got me, tell me what is to be my fate?"

"Why, that question is difficult to answer," said the chevalier; "Heaven knows I did not want you, madam. I was obliged to write you a formal summons to return, for mere decency's sake; but I certainly never expected you would obey it. You might have said No,

silly girl, without telling all the world that you had turned Huguenot—all for the love of a gallant knight."

"Nonsense, Louis! Do speak seriously," replied Clémence: "you very well know I was what you call a Huguenot long before."

"Not quite, Clémence! not quite!" cried the chevalier: "you were what may be called Huguenoting. But this rash and imprudent determination of declaring your feelings, doubts, or whatever they may be, at the very moment when the sword of persecution is drawn, was indeed very silly, Clémence. What is to be done now is rendered doubly difficult, and I suppose I must, of course, connive at your escape. We must take means to have an intimation conveyed for some trading vessels to hover about the coast, to give you an opportunity of getting away till this fierce bigotry has gone by. It will not last long; and in a year or two, I doubt not, exiles will be permitted to return. The only difficulty will be to have the ships opportunely; but I think I can manage that."

"Oh, do, do, Louis!" exclaimed Clémence, eagerly. "That is all that can be desired; and pray try to persuade Albert to fly at once."

"Nay, nay," replied the chevalier, laughing, "that must not be my task, Clémence. On that subject I dare not say a word. But you may well do what you will. I will take care that the means of flight to another country shall be provided for you, and you may take with you any one that is willing to go."

"But then," exclaimed Clémence, "I must have the opportunity of persuading him."

"Certainly," exclaimed the chevalier: "the first thing you have to do is to get out of my camp as fast as you can. I would not have you three days here for the world; for, as affairs go at present, I cannot answer that the power of protecting you will be left to me for three days. However," he added, after a moment's thought, "to-day you must stay and march on with us, and before to-morrow I trust I shall be able to put you under such protection as will ensure you safety and support in your flight; and now, pretty maid, I must leave you. We shall begin to march about noon. In the mean time there is a courier going to Montaigu, so send off thither for whatever you may need to make you comfortable. An easy horse shall be ready for you; and if at any time

you may feel yourself inclined to gallop away, you may take him with you as a present from me. By-the-way, little heretic," he added, when he got to the door, "you will want money for your peregrinations."

"Oh, no," replied Clémence, "I have plenty. I have plenty, I assure you. I have near two hundred double louis which I took to the prison in hopes—"

"Little do you know of what you may want, silly girl," replied the chevalier. "Why one of these very merchant ships may demand the half of that for carrying you over. Here," he added, drawing forth a leathern purse embroidered in gold; "I don't know how much there is here, but you must take it too; and if by any unforeseen circumstance you should need more when in England, draw on me what they call a bill of exchange."

Clémence took the money without ceremony, as if it were a mere matter of course, and only added, "Come and see me again before we march, Louis."

The chevalier nodded his head and left her.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LAST EFFORTS.

To describe the military manœuvres which took place during the three or four following days would be neither amusing nor instructive to the reader. Suffice it to say, that the small force of the Count de Morseiul diminished as he retreated, while the army of the Chevalier d'Evran was increased by the arrival of two new regiments. The latter had thus an opportunity of extending his line, and frustrating a vigorous effort made by the count to cut his way into Brittany. Every effort that the Protestant leader made to bring to his aid those who had promised very soon to join him, only showed him that the estimation which he had formed of the degree of vigour and unanimity to be expected from the Huguenots was but too accurate. Almost all those determined and daring leaders of the lower orders who had given energy and activity to all the movements of the insur-

gents had fallen in the preceding skirmishes. Herval was heard of no more; Paul Virlay had been seen by one of the soldiers to fall by a shot through the head towards the close of the last affair; and at length, with not more than five hundred men under his command, Albert of Morseiul found himself shut in between a force of eight thousand men and the sea. The only consolation that he had was to hear that Clémence de Marly was safe, and the only hope was that some vessels from Rochelle, for which he had despatched a shallop in haste, might be tempted by the large sum he offered to hasten round and carry off a certain portion of his troops, comprising the principal leaders, while the rest laid down their arms, and he himself surrendered to the fate that awaited him.

Such were his plans and purposes when the last day of the insurrection dawned upon the world; and we must pause for an instant to describe the situation of his little force on that eventful morning.

There is upon that coast a small rocky island, not so high as the celebrated Mont St. Michel, which is on the opposite side of the peninsula of Brittany, but in almost every other respect similar to that famous rock. At the time we speak of this island was fortified, and the guns of the castle commanded almost entirely the small bay in which it was situated. At low water the island becomes a peninsula, being joined to the land like the Mont St. Michel, by a narrow neck of land, along the top of which there ran a paved causeway, covered entirely by the sea to the depth of five or six feet at the time of high water. The commandant of the fort was a Protestant gentleman who had distinguished himself in some degree in the service. He had been raised, and greatly favoured by the influence of the Counts of Morseiul, and owed his post to them. He had not only promised to co-operate with the young count in the commencement of the unfortunate revolt, but he had sent him some assistance, and a large quantity of ammunition; and when the count found that he was cut off from forcing his way into Brittany on the one hand, or reaching Sainctonge on the other, he had shaped his course past Montaigu towards the little bay in which this island was situated, and had succeeded in reaching it, notwithstanding the efforts of the royalist corps to prevent him.

Opposite to the island was a small village, on a high

bank above the seashore. It possessed a large church, and two or three walled farmhouses; and during one half the night after his arrival, the count toiled with the country people, who were principally Protestants, to throw up breastworks and plant pallisades, so as to fortify the village in as strong a manner as possible. Four cannon, which were all that he possessed, were planted to command the principal road leading to the village, and, ere morning, the whole was brought to such a condition as to enable the little band of Protestants to offer a determined and lengthened resistance should they be driven to do so.

Was it then, it may be asked, the purpose of the count to offer that resistance? It certainly was not; but feeling perfectly sure that the Chevalier d'Evran was disposed to grant the Protestants the most lenient terms consistent with his duty, he took these measures in order to give him the best excuse for treating with the insurgents, and granting them a favourable capitulation. "If," he thought, "the chevalier can show to the king that it would have cost him two or three thousand of his best troops to overcome or slaughter a poor body of five hundred men, Louis is too wise and too good a soldier himself not to hold him perfectly justified for granting the mildest terms."

When all was completed, the count cast himself down to rest, and slept for some time from utter exhaustion. By the first ray of morning, however, he was upon the shore, looking towards the sea, and beheld, to his no small joy and satisfaction, three vessels, at the distance of about four or five miles, standing off and on, as if waiting for the tide to enter the bay. The tide, however, though not quite at the ebb, had sunk so low that there was no chance of their being able to come in till it had quite gone down and risen again; and Albert of Morseiul looked with anxiety for the passing of six or seven hours which must thus elapse.

His anxiety now led him to the other side of the village; and going to one of the farmhouses, situated at the corner of a small cartroad which he had barricaded, he went up to a window on the first floor, and looked over the wide view that sloped away below. There appeared, what he had expected to find, the camp of the Chevalier d'Evran hemming him in on all sides. The distance between the village and the first tents was

about two miles, so that at any time, without more than half an hour's notice, the attack upon his little fortress might commence. He was quite prepared, it is true, and doubted not to be able to maintain his post for many hours, knowing that his men would fight with the energy of despair.

But no movement whatsoever in the royalist camp indicated any great haste to attack him. There were no groups of officers busily reconnoitring; there were no regiments drawn up as if to march to the assault; and the only objects that were seen were two files of soldiers marching along to relieve the guard at different points of the camp. All this was satisfactory to an experienced eye like that of the Count de Morseiul; and, well knowing his opponent, he judged that the chevalier was waiting for some reply from Paris ere he gave any answer to the terms which he, the count, had suggested.

He paused, therefore, for nearly twenty minutes, gazing over the scene, when suddenly, from a point of the camp where nothing seemed stirring before, a little group of persons on horseback drew out, and rode swiftly towards the village. The moment after the count perceived that two of those persons were clad in women's garments; and the rapidity with which they came showed him that they were fearful of being stopped. Going down from the window in haste, he sprang upon horseback, and with the attendants who were waiting for him below, rode out upon the side of the hill, in order to assist the fugitives in case of need; but no sign of pursuit took place till one half of the distance or more had been passed by the little party; and the count, dismounting about a quarter of a mile from the village, watched their coming with eager eyes and a beating heart, as he recognised the form of Clémence de Marly. When she was beyond all risk of being overtaken, a small party of cavaliers issued forth from another part of the camp, and rode on towards the village, but slowly, and they were still at more than a mile's distance when Clémence was in the arms of her lover, and weeping upon his bosom. He led her in as fast as possible, followed by the maid Maria, and no less a person than Jerome Riquet, who seemed to have found of breaking his word so strong a temptation that he could not resist it.

A rumour had spread among the Protestants in the town that something of interest was proceeding without; and when the count and Clémence turned towards the village, they found that their meeting had been witnessed by many eyes. But in the faces of those they passed, Albert of Morseiul read courage brightened and resolution strengthened by that which they had just seen; and there was not a man within that little encampment whose heart did not feel elevated and confirmed by witnessing the bursting forth of those tender and ennobling feelings, which ever, when pure and true, dignify man's spirit and brighten his mind.

When they were within the barriers, the count turned for a moment to look at the other group which had drawn out from the camp; but it did not seem that they were in pursuit of Clémence, for they shaped their course along the road towards the principal entrance of the village, and, when the count turned, he clearly saw them displaying a flag of truce. He led Clémence into the house where he had taken up his headquarters, however, and saying a few soothing words, left her to see what was the intelligence which the chevalier's envoys conveyed. As he walked down he met a messenger coming to demand his presence at the barrier; and, on approaching it, he found waiting in the guardhouse the old English officer, Sir Thomas Cecil, with one or two French gentlemen with whom he was slightly acquainted.

"Monsieur de Morseiul," said the old Englishman, "I have been charged by Major-General the Chevalier d'Evran to communicate to you the only terms which he is permitted by the king to grant under the circumstances in which you respectively stand. He was long in hopes that those terms would have been more favourable than they are, and they are very painful to me to announce. But as you conveyed to him a message through me, he thought that I ought to undertake to bear the reply."

"I thank you, my dear sir," replied the count, "most sincerely for undertaking the task. But, as a preliminary, let me tell you before these gentlemen who have come with you, as well as before Monsieur du Bar here, and my own friends around me, that the only terms which I will accept are those which I notified to the Chevalier d'Evran through you, namely, permission for

any one hundred of my friends of the reformed religion to retire from France unmolested; a free pardon to all the rest, except myself, on laying down their arms, and a promise that they shall be permitted to exercise their religion in private without annoyance. On these conditions we will immediately lay down our arms, and I will surrender myself at discretion to his majesty's pleasure."

"No, no! No, no!" cried several voices among the Protestants; "we cannot submit to that. We will die at our post, with arms in our hands, rather than that the count shall be sacrificed."

"My good friends," replied the count, "that is a personal matter altogether. I have made the best terms that I can for you, and I have done what I judge right for myself; knowing that the only way of dealing with his majesty is to throw myself upon his magnanimity."

The old Englishman wiped away a tear from his eye. "I am sorry to say, sir," he rejoined, "that I cannot even mention such favourable terms as those. On condition of your immediately laying down your arms, the Chevalier d'Evran, in the name of the king, offers the following: Permission for every one not absolutely a subject of France to leave the country unmolested. Free pardon to all but the actual leaders of the revolt, specified in the following list. They must unconditionally surrender to the king's pleasure and trust to his mercy."

The list apparently contained about fifty names, at the head of which stood that of the Count of Morseiul. The count looked round upon the Protestant gentlemen by whom he was surrounded. On all their countenances but one or two there was awe, but not fear. As the only reply needful, the Marquis du Bar laid his finger upon the hilt of his sword, and the count, turning to Sir Thomas Cecil, said, "You perceive, sir, that it is utterly impossible we can accede to this demand. I know not whether it has been made under any mistaken impression; but when I offered what I did offer through you to the Chevalier d'Evran, I was just as certain that we should be reduced to the situation in which we are at present, as I am now; nay, expected it to be worse than it is. We can but die, sir; and I have not the slightest objection to lead you round the preparations which I have made for resisting to the last; so that, if

our blood must be shed, and the chevalier is determined to sacrifice the lives of a large body of our royal master's troops, he may be satisfied that he cannot carry this position without the loss of two or three thousand men."

"It is not necessary, count. It is not necessary," replied the old officer. "The chevalier has no choice; the terms are dictated by higher authority; and all that he can do farther than signify those terms to you is to grant you five hours to consider of them. If you like to accept a truce for that time, you may take it."

The count was not a little surprised at this indulgence, but he took care to express none; and, accepting the truce willingly, suffered the old officer to depart. One or two of the young French officers, whom he had known in the army, wrung his hand as they went away, and besought him, with kindly feelings, to think well of what he was about. One of them, however, ere he went, whispered a more important word in his ear.

"There are ships out at sea," he said. "You and the other leaders may get off before the five hours are out."

The count took no notice, but wished him good-by; and returning with Monsieur du Bar and the rest of the officers, he held a brief consultation with them in the saloon of the little inn.

"Had we more boats," he said, "the matter would be easily managed. But there are but two on the shore, which will not carry out above twenty of us. However, my good friends, it becomes necessary to take some prompt resolution. I have begun to be somewhat doubtful to-day of Le Luc, who commands in the fort. He has sent me no answer to my note of last night; and though I do not believe he would be so great a scoundrel, after all his promises, as to turn against us, yet I must ascertain decidedly what are his intentions; for he might sink the boats as they passed under his guns. If he be still friendly to us, and willing really to aid us, we are safe; for while the soldiery lay down their arms and surrender upon promise of free pardon, you, gentlemen, who all of you, I find, are upon this long list of proscription, can march along the causeway into the fort, and embark in the ships that lie out there. If, on the contrary, we find him a traitor, we must make the boats hold as many as they will, and take the chance

of the scoundrel firing upon them. I shall only claim to have one place reserved in one of the boats."

"Two," said Du Bar; "surely two, Morseiul. Did I not see a lady?"

"It is for her I speak," replied the count. "Du Bar, in pity do not urge me in matters where my resolution is taken. I have pangs and agony at my heart sufficient at this moment, believe me, to be spared that of refusing a friend. Now then, gentlemen," he added, after a moment's pause, "let five of you accompany me along the causeway, which must be passable by this time, to speak to Governor le Luc. If you will mount your horses, I will be down with you in an instant," and he went up to take one hurried embrace of her he loved, and to explain to her what had happened, and what was proposed, concealing from her, as far as he could, the dangers and difficulties of their situation; but concealing from her still more carefully his own purpose of surrendering at discretion.

When this was done he went down, and finding the other gentlemen ready, sprang upon his horse, without noticing that a multitude of the inferior Protestants had gathered round, and seemed to be watching them with somewhat suspicious eyes.

The sea had not quite left the causeway dry, except in one or two places, and the sands were still quite covered. But the only result of this was to force the count and his train to proceed slowly, and one by one, while he himself led the way, the white stone pavement being clearly discernible through the thin water.

In the mean time, however, the Protestants who had been gazing at him as he mounted gathered into knots together, and seemed to be speaking hastily and discontentedly. Some of the inferior officers joined them, and a great deal of tumult and talking ensued, which called out several of the gentlemen of the party to remonstrate. But remonstrance seemed in vain, and the crowd soon after trooped away out of the little open space where they had assembled in the direction of the corps de garde, where the small battery of cannon was placed. Various broken sentences, however, were heard from time to time, such as, "I would hardly have believed it. To take care of themselves, and leave us to perish. I always said we should be made the sacrifice. Better be a Catholic and at peace, than that."

"Ride after the count and tell him what is going on," said one of the gentlemen to another, "while I go to our good minister, Monsieur Vigni, and get him to reason with them. You see they are mistaking the matter altogether, and think that we are going to abandon them. Make haste, or it will be too late."

The suggestion was instantly followed; but, ere the officer could get his horse and ride down to the seashore, the count and his party were nearly at the fort, and to them we must now turn.

The progress of the young general of the Huguenots had been slower than it might have been, not only on account of the causeway being partially covered with water, but also because the stone, with which it was composed, had in some places been broken up or carried away. He at length reached, however, the fortified head of the causeway at the foot of the rock, and then demanded admission to speak with the governor.

This was refused him; but as such might naturally be the case, his suspicions were but little increased by that event. He however directed the officer in command immediately to send up and inform the governor Le Luc of his being there, and of his desire to speak with him.

After keeping him some time, the officer returned, saying "that Monsieur le Luc would come down himself to speak with the count;" and during the period that the Protestant leaders were thus occupied in waiting for the appearance of the governor, the Protestant officer arrived from the village, bringing news that the soldiery which had been left behind were in a state of actual mutiny, having entirely mistaken the object of the count and his companions, and imagined that they were engaged in seeking their own safety, leaving the soldiers to meet whatever fate might befall them.

"In the name of Heaven, ride back, Du Bar," said the count, "and quiet them till I return. It is better for me to stay and speak to this worthy gentleman, who seems to be showing us a cold face, as you know he owes everything to my house. I will return instantly, as soon as he condescends to favour us with his presence."

Du Bar did not reply, but turned his horse, for they were still kept on the outside even of the causeway head, and rode back as fast as he could go, accompanied by one of the other officers.

The count remained, growing more and more impa-

tient every moment; and the governor, perhaps thinking that he would get tired of waiting, and retire without an answer, kept him nearly half an hour before he made his appearance. He then came down with that dull and dogged look which generally accompanies the purpose of disgraceful actions; and the count, restraining his indignation, called to him to cause the drawbridge to be lowered, in order that he might speak to him more privately.

"No, indeed," replied the governor, with a scoff; "with the little force I have in here, I shall not think of causing the drawbridge to be lowered, when I know that the village is occupied by a large party of armed traitors."

"Traitors!" exclaimed the count; but again overcoming his anger, he added, in a cooler tone, "Monsieur le Luc, up to this moment I have believed you to be of the reformed church."

"I am so no longer," muttered the governor.

"Well, sir," continued the count, "there are other things which may have influence upon men of honour and good feeling besides their religion. There is at the village, as you say, a large party of Protestant gentlemen, assembled in defence of their liberty and freedom of conscience: they find themselves unable to resist the power of those that would oppress them; terms are proposed for extending a free pardon to all but some thirty or forty; those thirty or forty are desirous of obtaining shelter in this fortress for one or two hours at the utmost, till they can embark in those ships, which are waiting for the rising of the tide. Now, Monsieur le Luc, my father gave you the first commission that you held under the crown. He obtained for you your first promotion, and I bestowed upon you the post in this fortress which you now hold. Will you, sir, grant us the shelter that we demand at your hand?"

"Very pretty," replied Le Luc, "to talk of honour, and ask me to betray the trust that the king reposes in me."

Still the count kept his temper. "You refuse, then?" he demanded.

"Yes, that I do," answered the governor, in a rude tone; "and the sooner you take yourself back to the land the better, for I am in no humour to be trifled with."

It was with difficulty that the count restrained himself; but there was one chance more, and he tried it.

"Yet another word, my good friend," he said. "There

is a matter in which you can favour us without endangering your own safety, or getting into discredit with the government. If we attempt to pass to the ships in what boats we can find, will you pledge me your word that you do not fire into them?"

"If you do not make haste away from the gates of this fortress," replied the governor, who saw, by the quivering of the count's lip, the contempt that he could not help feeling, "I will fire upon you where you are, and will sink the boat of every traitor that comes within shot."

"Sir," said the count, "you are a dastardly, pitiful, contemptible scoundrel. It is only happy for you that the drawbridge is between us, or I would treat you like an ill-conditioned hound, and lash you within an inch of your life under my horse's feet."

"You shall hear more, traitor; you shall hear more in a minute," replied the governor. "And mind I tell you, the faster you go the better for you."

Thus saying, he turned away and mounted the zigzag staircase in the rock with a rapid step. The count paused and turned his horse; but at that very moment he saw a party of horsemen at the other end of the causeway apparently coming towards him with great speed, part of them upon the sands, which by this time had been left dry, part of them following the road in the midst.

"It is Du Bar and the rest," said he, in a low voice, to one of the gentlemen near him. "I have a very great mind to stay here, and try to punish that fellow for his insolence. I could swim that little bit of sea in a moment, and, the drawbridge once in our possession, the castle would be ours."

"Count, count," shouted the officer of the guard from the fortress-side of the drawbridge, "for God's sake make haste and ride back. I hear that governor of ours giving orders for charging the cannon with grape. He will fire upon you as sure as I am alive, for he sent word to the Chevalier d'Evran last night that he would do so."

"I thank you, sir, for your courtesy," replied the count, calmly. "Under these circumstances, my friends, it is better for us to go back."

The other officers put their horses into a quick pace, and they rode on; but they had scarcely gone a hun-

dred yards when the cannon of the castle opened a fire of grape upon them. The shot, however, flew over their heads, as they were too near the walls to be easily hit, except from the drawbridge, where the count could see preparations being made for following up the same course. At the same moment, however, he pulled up his horse, exclaiming, "Good God, that is not the Marquis du Bar; it is the Chevalier d'Evran!"

The officers who were with him paused also, and to their surprise, and somewhat to their consternation, perceived that, shut in as they were by the sea on two sides and by the fortress on another, the only open ground before them was occupied by the commander-in-chief of the royalist forces, with a numerous staff and a small escort of cavalry.

"We have nothing for it, my friends," said the Count de Morseiul, in a low, calm tone, "but to surrender; it is evident our men have capitulated in the village. Let us ride on and meet them."

Thus saying, he spurred on his horse, while the Chevalier d'Evran galloped forward on his side, waving his hat and shaking his clinched fist towards the people on the walls of the fort. They either did not recognise him, however, or did not choose to obey his commands; and before he and the Count de Morseiul met, a second discharge of grapeshot took place from the cannon of the castle. At the same moment the Count de Morseiul beheld the Chevalier d'Evran suddenly check up his horse, press his hand upon his side, and fall headlong to the ground, while one of the horses of the count's party was killed upon the spot, and an officer of the chevalier's staff fell wounded, but rose up again immediately.

The count galloped eagerly on to the spot where he had seen the Chevalier d'Evran fall, and the memory of long friendship came painfully back upon his heart. Before he had reached the group of soldiers and officers, however, five or six men had raised the unfortunate commander from the ground, and were bearing him rapidly back towards the village. So eagerly were those who remained conversing together, and so fully occupied with their own thoughts, that the Count de Morseiul might, to all appearance, have passed by them without opposition or inquiry; but he himself drew in his rein, demanding, "Is he much hurt?"

"Alas! Monsieur de Morseiul," replied the officer,

who seemed to be next in command, "he is dead! Killed on the spot by that infernal shot! and a nobler gentleman or better soldier never lived. But some of your own people are killed also, are they not?"

"One of the horses only, I believe," replied the count. "Pray, may I ask how all this has happened? Poor Louis!"

"Ride on, ride on, Charliot," said the officer, speaking to one of his own men before he answered the count; "that scoundrel will fire upon us again. Tell him I will hang him over the drawbridge if he fires another shot. Monsieur de Morseiul, I will explain all this as we ride back, for you will have but little time to make your arrangements. Scarcely half an hour ago, as Monsieur d'Evran and the rest of us were reconnoitring pretty close to your camp, a party of your men came out and offered to capitulate on certain terms, which the chevalier instantly agreed to, and they gave us possession of the gate and the corps de garde. Just at that moment, however, came up Monsieur du Bar, who remonstrated somewhat angrily with the chevalier on signing a capitulation with the men, when he had given the officers a truce of five hours to consider of his terms. He represented that in those five hours all the gentlemen named in the proscribed list might have made their escape. On that the chevalier replied that he intended to take no advantage; that the truce should be held to exist, notwithstanding the capitulation; and that every gentleman on that list might act exactly as he pleased, without any one trying to impede him. He could not suffer them, of course, to pass through our camp; but, if they could escape by sea, they might. He said, however, that he wished to speak with this Le Luc, and that he would take the liberty of riding down through the village. Du Bar then asked if he intended to bid Le Luc fire on the boats or ships. He answered, Quite the contrary; that his only intention was to supersede him in his command, and put an officer in his place who would keep the truce to the letter. You have, therefore, yet four hours nearly to do what you will in, Monsieur de Morseiul; for I, of course, taking the chevalier's command, shall maintain all his arrangements, and act in their full spirit."

The count had listened sadly and attentively; and when the royalist officer had done speaking, he replied

that by his leave he would ride on as fast as possible to the village, and consult with his companions.

"Do so! do so!" answered the other; "and, now I think of it, I had better go on to the fort, and put the chevalier's intentions in execution; for this firing upon you may be considered already a breach of the truce. I shall find you on my return; and at the little auberge you will meet with an English gentleman most anxious to speak with you." Thus saying, he turned again towards the fort, and the count, with a sad heart, rode back to the village.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BITTER PARTING.

Just at the entrance of the village, the count met with his companion Du Bar.

"Have you heard all?" demanded that officer. "What is to be done?"

"Get the boats ready with all speed," replied the count. "The tide will turn within half an hour, the ships will be able to come farther in. Twenty or thirty persons may get off in the first boats, which must come back again for a second freight. I see clearly, my friend, that there is no intention of dealing harshly with us. All the officers wish us to escape, and there will be no more firing from the castle. I must leave the embarcation and all that to you, Du Bar, for I have things to go through that will try my heart to the utmost. I must have a few minutes to make up my mind to parting with my friends and companions, and all that I love on earth, for ever. Du Bar," he continued, while the other wrung his hand affectionately, "there will be a young lady who will accompany you, and that girl, the daughter of poor Virlay. You have a wife and children yourself, whom you love, I know, fondly and devotedly. They are in safety, you told me, on those opposite shores which I shall never see. But let me beseech you, by the memory of these dark and terrible days, when the hand that now presses yours is laid in

the dust, as I know too well must soon be the case; let me beseech you, I say, to give every aid and assistance to those two that I now commit to your charge. Be to the one as a brother, Du Bar, and to the other as a father. I know you to be honest and true, as you are brave and wise; and I shall lay my head upon the block with more peace at my heart if you promise me that which I now ask."

"I do, I do," replied the marquis, with the tears standing in his eyes. "I do promise you, from my heart, and I would fain persuade you even now to consider—"

But the count waved his hand and rode on.

There was a considerable crowd round the entrance of the little inn, and he had some difficulty in making his way in. At the door of the room where he had fixed his own quarters he found two or three of the royalist soldiers; but, passing by them, he entered the room, when a sight met his eye which might well chill and wring his heart.

The room was nearly empty, but stretched upon the long table which occupied the midst was the fine, noble form of the Chevalier d'Evran, now still in death. Standing near the head of the body was the old English officer, Sir Thomas Cecil, with an air of deep, stern grief upon his fine and striking countenance. His hat was off, showing his white hair; his arms were crossed upon his chest, his head was erect as ever, and nothing like a tear was in his eye; but there was no mistaking the expression of his countenance. It was that of intense sorrow. But on the other side of the table grief was displaying itself in a different manner and in a different form. For there knelt Clémence de Marly, with her beautiful head bent down over the dead body; her hair, fallen from its bindings, scattered wildly, partly over her own shoulders, partly over the breast of the chevalier; her left hand clasping that of the dead man, her eyes and face buried on his bosom, while the convulsing sobs that shook her whole frame told how bitterly she was weeping.

The count paused with a look of deep sadness; but there was no anger or jealousy in his countenance. The old English officer, however, as soon as he perceived him, hurried forward and took both his hands, saying, in a low and solemn voice, "You must let her weep, count, you must let her weep! It is her brother!"

"I have been sure of it for several days," replied the count. "She told me not, but I knew it from what she did tell me. This day of agony, however, sir, is not yet over. I must disturb her grief but to waken her to more. You know the short time that is allowed for flight. You know the fate that would await her here if she were to remain in this country as what is called a relapsed heretic, by the cruel persecutors of this land. Within two hours from this time, my good sir, she must take her departure for ever. The boats will be ready, and not a moment must be lost; and in those two short hours she must part with one who loves her as well as ever woman yet was loved; with one who truly believes she loves him as well as woman's heart can love; and who shall say where is the boundary of that boundless affection? She must part with him, sir, for ever, and with her native land."

"This is not her native land," replied the old officer. "The Lady Clémence Cecil, sir, is an Englishwoman. But in one respect you say true. My poor niece must go, for I have experienced in my own person, as you know, how daring is the injustice of arbitrary power in this land, in the prisons of which I, an English subject, have been detained for more than a year and a half, till our own papistical and despotic king chose to apply to your despot for my liberation and for the restoration of my brother's children. She must leave this land indeed. But your words imply that you must stay behind. Tell me, tell me, my noble friend, is this absolutely necessary, in honour and in conscience?"

The count grasped his hand, and pointed to the dead body. "I promised him," he said, "who lies there, that I would surrender myself to the king's pleasure. I have every reason to believe, that, in consideration of that promise, he dealt as favourably with us as he was permitted; that he even went beyond the strict line of his duty to give us some facilities of escape; and I must hold my promise to the dead as well as if he were here to claim it."

"God forbid," said Sir Thomas Cecil, "that I should say one word against it, terrible as is your determination—for you must well know the fate that awaits you. It seems to me that there was only that one act wanting to make you all that our poor Clémence ought to love on earth, at the very moment she is to lose you

for ever. See, she is raising her head. Speak to her, my friend, speak to her!"

The count advanced and threw his arms round her. He knew that the grief which she felt was one that words could do nothing to mitigate, and the only consolation that he offered was thus by pressing her fondly to his heart, as if to express that there was love and tenderness yet left for her on earth. Clémence rose and wiped away her tears, for she felt he might think that some doubt of his affection mingled with her grief for her brother, if she suffered it to fall into excess.

"Oh, Albert," she said, "this is very terrible. I have but you now—"

A hesitation came over the Count de Morseiul as she spoke those words, gazing tenderly and confidingly upon him: a hesitation as to whether he should at once tell her his determination, or not let her know that he was about to remain behind till she was absolutely in the boat destined to bear her away. It was a terrible question that he thus put to his own heart. But he thought it would be cruel not to tell her, however dreadful might be the struggle to witness and to share.

"Alas, Clémence," he replied, "I must soon trust you, for a time at least, to other guidance, to other protection than my own. The boats are preparing to carry off a certain number of our friends to England. You must go in one of them, Clémence, and that immediately. Your noble uncle here, for such I understand he is, Sir Thomas Cecil, will protect you, I know, and be a father to you. The Marquis du Bar, too, one of the noblest of men, will be to you as a brother."

Clémence replied not, but gazed with a look of deep, earnest, imploring inquiry in the countenance of her lover; and, after a moment, he answered that look by adding, "I have given my promise, Clémence, to remain behind!"

"To death, to death!" cried Clémence, casting herself upon his bosom, and weeping bitterly; "you are remaining to die. I know it. I know it, and I will never quit you!"

The count kissed her tenderly and pressed her to his heart; but he suffered not his resolution to be shaken. "Listen to me, my Clémence," he said. "What may be my fate I know not: but I trust in God's mercy and in my own uprightness of intentions. But think, Clé-

mence, only think, dear Clémence, how terrible would be my feelings, how tenfold deep and agonizing would be all that I may have to suffer, if I knew that not only I myself was in danger, but that you also were in still greater peril. If I knew that you were in imprisonment; that the having followed the dictates of your conscience was imputed to you as a crime; that you were to be tormented by the agony of trial before a tyrannical tribunal, and doomed to torture, to cruel death, or to eternal imprisonment. Conceive, Clémence, conceive how my heart would be wrung under such circumstances. Conceive how to every pang that I may otherwise suffer would be added the infinite weight of grief, and indignation, and suspense on your account. Conceive all this, and then, oh Clémence, be merciful, be kind, and give me the blessing of seeing you depart in safety, as a consolation and a support under all that I may have myself to suffer."

Clémence wept bitterly upon his bosom, and the count soothed her by every endearing and tender word. At length she suddenly raised her head, as if some new idea had struck her, and she exclaimed, "I will go, Albert. I will go upon one condition, without torturing you more by opposition."

"What is that condition, dear Clémence?" demanded the count, gazing on her face, which was glowing warmly even through her tears. "What is that condition, dearest Clémence?"

Clémence hid her face again upon his breast, and answered, "It is, that I may become your wife before I quit this shore. We have Protestant ministers here; the ceremony can be easily performed. My uncle, I know, will offer no opposition; and I would fain bear the name of one so noble and so beloved to another land and to the grave, which may, perhaps, soon reunite us."

The count's heart was wrung, but he replied,

"Oh, beloved Clémence, why, why propose that which must not, which cannot be; why propose that which, though so tempting to every feeling of my heart, would cover me with well-deserved shame if I yielded to it? Think, think, Clémence, what would deservedly be said of me if I were to consent, if I were to allow you to become my wife; to part with you at the altar, and

perhaps, by my death as a condemned criminal, to leave you an unprotected widow within a few days."

Clémence clasped her hands, vehemently exclaiming, "So help me Heaven, as I would rather be the widow of Albert of Morseiul than the wife of any other man that ever lived on earth!"

Sir Thomas Cecil, however, interposed. "Clémence," he said, "your lover is right; but he will not use arguments to persuade you that I may use. This is a severe and bitter trial. The Almighty only knows how it will terminate; but, my dear child, remember that this is no ordinary man you love. Let his character be complete to the last! Do not, do not, by any solicitation of yours, Clémence, take the least brightness from his bright example. Let him go on, my child, to do what he believes his duty at all risks and through all sacrifices. Let there not be one selfish spot from the beginning to the end for man to point at; and the Almighty will protect and reward him to whom he has given power to act uprightly to the last; if not in this world, in another he will be blessed, Clémence, and to that other we must turn our hopes of happiness, for here it is God's will that we should have tribulation."

Clémence clasped her hands, and bent down her eyes to the ground. For several minutes she remained as if in deep thought, and then said, in a low but a firmer voice, "Albert, I yield; and knowing, from what is in my own heart, how dreadful this moment must be to you, I will not render it more dreadful by asking you anything more that you must refuse. I will endeavour to be as calm as I can, Albert; but weep I must. Perhaps," she added, with a faint, faint smile upon her lips, "I might weep less if there were no hope; if it were all despair; but I see a glimmering for exertion on my part, if not exactly for hope; and that exertion may certainly be better made in another land than if I were to remain here; and now for the pain of departure. That must be undergone, and I am ready to undergo it rather at once than when I have forgotten my faint resolution. Do you go with me?" she continued, turning to her uncle; "if it be needful that you stay, I fear not to go alone."

Sir Thomas Cecil, however, replied that he was ready to accompany her. Her maid, Maria, was warned to prepare with all speed; and, ere a few more sen-

tences were spoken on either part, the Marquis du Bar came to inform the count that the boats were afloat, and the vessels standing in, as far as they could, into the bay. The Huguenot gentlemen mentioned in the list of proscription were already on the shore, and not a little eager to be in the first boats to put off. The soldiery were drawn up under arms to await the expiration of the truce; and as the count and Sir Thomas Cecil led down Clémence, weeping bitterly, to the sands, a murmur of sympathy and compassion ran through the crowd, and through the ranks of the soldiery, and the gentlemen drew back to give her the first place in the boats. Before they reached the edge, however, the count, whose eye had been raised for a moment to the vessels, pointed towards them with a smile of satisfaction.

"Gentlemen," he said, looking round, "I am happy to see that you will all be able to get off without risk. Do you not perceive they are sending off their boats for you? Clémence," he said, in a lower voice, "will you go at once, or will you wait till the other boats arrive, and all go together?"

"Let me wait, let me wait," said Clémence, in the same low tone. "Every moment that my hand touches yours is a treasure."

The other boats came in rapidly with the returning tide; and, as soon as their keels touched the sand, and a few words had been spoken to ascertain that all was right and understood, the count turned and said,

"Now, gentlemen."

There were some twenty or thirty yards of shallow water between the sands and the boats, and Albert of Morseiul raised Clémence in his arms and carried her to the edge of the first. Neither of them spoke a word; but as, leaning over, he placed her in the boat, she felt his arms clasp more tightly round her, and his lips were pressed upon hers.

"The Almighty bless thee!" and "God protect and deliver you!" was all that was said on either side; and the count turned back to the shore.

One by one the different officers advanced to him in silence, and grasped his hand before they proceeded to the boats. When they were all in and the boats began to bush off, the count pulled off his hat and stood bareheaded, looking up to Heaven. But at that moment a

loud shout burst from the soldiery of "The count, the count, they have forgotten the count!"

But the Count of Morseiul turned round towards them, and said aloud, in his usual calm, firm tone, "They have not forgotten me, my friends. It was you that were mistaken when you thought that I had forgotten you. I remain to meet my fate, whatever that may be."

A number of men in the ranks instantly threw down their muskets, and rushing forward, clasped his knees, beseeching him to go. But he waved his hand, saying gently, "It is in vain, my friends! My determination has been taken for many days. Go back to your ranks, my good fellows, go back to your ranks! I will but see the boats safe, and then join you, to surrender the village and lay down our arms."

The count then turned again to the sea, and watched the four boats row onward from the shore. They reached the vessels in safety in a few minutes; in a few minutes more the boats belonging to the village began to row back empty. After a little pause, some more canvass was seen displayed upon the yards of the vessels. They began to move; they sailed out of the harbour; and, after gazing down upon the sand fixedly and intently while one might count a hundred, the Count of Morseiul, feeling himself solitary, turned, gave the word of command, and marched the men back into the village. He entered immediately into the room where the Chevalier d'Evran lay, and although by this time all the principal officers of the royalist force were there, with several other persons, among whom was his own servant Riquet, he walked silently up to the head of the corpse, and gazed for several minutes on the dead man's face. Then lifting the cold hand, he pressed it affectionately in his.

"God receive thee, Louis! God receive thee!" he said, and his eyes filled with the first tears that they had shed that day.

"I see no use now, sir," he continued, turning to the officer who had taken the command of the royal forces, "I see no use of delaying any longer the surrender of the village. I am ready in person to give it up to you this moment, and also to surrender my sword. The only favour I have to ask is, that you will make it known to his majesty that I had no share in the event by which

my unhappy friend here fell. The shot which slew him was intended for me, as you are doubtless aware."

"Perfectly," replied the commander; "and I have already sent off a despatch to the king, giving him an account of the events of this morning; and I myself, joined with all the officers here present, have not failed to testify our sense of the noble, upright, and disinterested conduct of the Count of Morseiul. I would fain speak with him a word alone, however," and he drew him aside to the window. "Count," he said, "I shall not demand your sword, nor in any way affect your liberty, if you will promise to go to Paris immediately, and surrender yourself there. If you would take my advice, you would go at once to the king, and cast yourself at his feet. Ask for no audience, but seek admission to him at some public moment. If fortune favours you, which I trust it will, you may have an opportunity of explaining to his majesty many things that have probably been misrepresented."

"I shall certainly follow your advice," said the count, "since you put it in my power to do so."

"Ah, gentlemen," cried Riquet, who had been listening unperceived to all they said, "if the poor chevalier had lived, the count would have been quite safe, for he had the means of proving that the count saved the king's life not long ago, of which his majesty knows nothing. I heard the man Herval make his confession to the chevalier with my own ears; but he could not take it down, for the man died before pen and ink could do their work."

"That is unfortunate indeed," said the commander; "but still you can give your testimony of the facts, my good friend."

"Bless you, sir," replied Riquet, "they will never believe anything I can say."

"I fear not, indeed," replied the count. "Besides, sir, my good friend Riquet, if he went to Paris, would have so much to confess on his own account, that they would not mind what he said in regard to the confessions of others."

"Unfortunately, too," said the commander, "all the papers of Hatréaumont, if I remember right, were ordered to be burned by the common hangman. Such was the sentence of the court, I know, and it must have been executed long ago. However, count, the plan that I have proposed is still the best. Speed to Paris

with what haste you may: cast yourself upon the king's mercy: tell him all and everything, if he will permit you to do so, and engage all your friends to support your cause at the same moment. Take your way at once into Brittany," he added, dropping his voice, "and from thence to Paris; for I very much fear that the result would be fatal if you were to fall into the hands of the intendant of Poitou. He is exasperated to the highest degree. You have surrendered at discretion, taken with arms in your hand. He has already broken on the wheel two or three hundred under the same circumstances; and I dare not deal with him in the same way that the Chevalier d'Eyran did, for I have not sufficient power."

The count thanked him for his advice, and followed it; and, as we must not pause upon such circumstances as the surrender of the village, we shall let that event be supposed to have taken place; and in our next chapter shall, if possible, pursue this sad history to its conclusion.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE END.

It was in the great reception room at Versailles, an hour after the king had held the council, which failed not to meet every day. His mood was neither more nor less severe than ordinary; for if, on the one hand, events had taken place which had given him pleasure, other events had reached his ears from the south of France, which showed him, notwithstanding all Louvois's efforts to conceal the extent of the evil, that serious disturbances in the Cevennes, and other parts of France, near the mouth of the Rhone, were likely to follow the measures which had been adopted against the Protestants.

Louvois himself was present, and in no very placable mood, the king having replied to him more than once during the morning haughtily and angrily, and repressed the insolence by which his demeanour was sometimes characterized with that severe dignity which the minister was very willing to see exercised towards any one but himself.

Louis, who was dressed in the most sumptuous manner, held in his hand a roll of papers, which had been given him just before his entrance into the chamber; but he did not read them, and merely turned them round and round from time to time, as if he were handling a truncheon. Many eyes were fixed upon him, and various were the hopes and fears which the aspect of that one man created in the breasts of those who surrounded him. All, however, were silent at that moment, for an event was about to take place highly flattering to the pride of the ostentatious King of France, and the eyes of all were fixed upon the doors at the end of the hall.

At length they opened, and a fine-looking middle-aged man, dressed in a robe of red velvet, followed by four others in black velvet, was led into the apartment and approached the king. He bowed low and reverently, and then addressed the French sovereign without embarrassment and with apparent ease, assuring the monarch in vague, but still flattering terms, that the republic of Genoa, of which he was doge, had entertained nothing, throughout the course of events lately passed, but profound respect for the crown of France.

Somewhat to the left of the king, among the multitude of French princes and officers, appeared one or two groups, consisting of the ambassadors from different barbaric nations; and while the Doge of Genoa spoke, offering excuses for the conduct of the state he ruled, the eye of Louis glanced from time to time to the Indian envoys in their gorgeous apparel, as they eagerly asked questions of their interpreter, and were told that it was the prince of an independent state come to humble himself before the mighty monarch that he had offended.

When the audience of the Doge of Genoa was over, and he withdrew, a multitude of the courtiers followed, so that the audience hall was nearly clear, and the king paused for a moment, talking over the doge's demeanour to those who surrounded him, and apparently about to retire immediately. He had taken a step forward, indeed, to do so, when the Prince de Marsillac, who certainly dared to press the king upon disagreeable subjects when no one else would run the risk, advanced, and, bowing low, pointed to the papers in the king's hand.

"I ventured, sire," he said, "before your majesty came here, to present to you those papers, which you promised to look at."

The king's brow instantly darkened. "I see at once, prince," he said, "that they refer to the Count of Morseiul, a rebel, as I am informed, taken with arms in his hand, in regard to whom the laws of the land must have their course."

The prince was somewhat abashed, and hesitated; but another gentleman stepped forward with stern and somewhat harsh features, but with a noble air and look that bespoke fearless sincerity.

"What is it, Montausier?" said the king, sharply addressing that celebrated nobleman, who is supposed to have been represented by Molière under the character of the misanthrope.

"Merely to say, sire," replied the duke, in a firm, strong tone of voice, "that some one has falsified the truth to your majesty. My nephew, in command of the troops to whom the count surrendered, informs me that he was not taken with arms in his hand, as you have said; but, on the contrary (and here lies a great difference), surrendered voluntarily, when, according to the truce of five hours granted to the Huguenots by the Chevalier d'Evran, he had every opportunity of escaping to England had he so pleased, as all the rest of the leaders on that occasion did."

"How is this, sir?" demanded the king, turning to Louvois. "I speak from your statements, and I hope you have not made me speak falsely."

"Sire," replied Louvois, with a look of effrontery, "I have just heard that what the duke says is the case; but I judged that all such points could naturally be investigated at the count's trial."

The king seemed struck with this observation; but Montausier instantly replied, "Monsieur de Louvois, if his majesty will permit me to tell you so, you have been, for the first time in your life, sadly tardy in receiving information; for my nephew informs me that he gave you intelligence of this fact no less than three days ago; and, in the next place, you are very well aware of what you have not thought fit to say, that by investigating such things at a trial, you would directly frustrate the express object for which the Count de Morseiul surrendered himself, when he might have escaped, which was to cast himself at the king's feet, and explain to him the strange and extraordinary misconception by which he was cast into rebellion, and to

prove that, as soon as ever he discovered the mistake which had been committed, he had expressed himself ready to surrender, and trust to the king's clemency, which is as great a quality as his justice."

Louvois's face had grown fiery red. "Expressed his readiness to surrender!" cried he, with a scoff. "Did he not fight two battles after that?"

"How, sir?" exclaimed the king. "I had understood from you that no battles had been fought at all. Mere skirmishes, you said—affairs of posts—that the insurrection was nothing but the revolt of a few peasants."

Louvois stammered forth some excuse about the numbers being insignificant, and the whole business crushed within nine days after the Chevalier d'Evran took the command; but the king turned away angrily, saying, "Monsieur de Louvois, no more interruption. I find in my middle age, as I found in my youth, that a king must see with his own eyes. Now, Marsillac, what is it you wish? What is it you desire of me, Montausier?"

"For my part, sire," replied the Prince de Marsillac, "I only desire that your majesty should run your eyes over those papers. They are very brief, and to the point; and every fact that is therein stated I can assure you can be proved on indisputable authority."

"And I," said the Duke of Montausier, "have only to beg that your majesty would see and hear the Count of Morseiul. From him, as every man here present knows, you will hear the pure and simple truth, which is a thing that happens to your majesty perhaps once in five or six years, and will do you good."

The king smiled, and turned his eyes upon the papers; and when he had read them nearly through, he smiled again, even more gayly than before.

"It turns out, gentlemen," he said, "that an affair has happened to me which I fancy happens to us all more than once in our lives. I have been completely cheated by a valet. I remember giving the villain the paper well, out of which it seems he manufactured a free pardon for his master. At all events, this frees the count from the charge of base ingratitude which has been heavily urged against him. Your statement of his willing surrender, Montausier, greatly diminishes his actual and undoubted crime; and as I have complied with the request of the Prince de Marsillac, and looked at the papers, I must not refuse you yours. Either to

day, if the count have arrived, or to-morrow, I will hear his story from his own lips."

"Sire," replied the Duke of Montausier, "I have been daring enough to receive him in my apartments."

The cloud came slightly over Louis's countenance; but, though he replied with dignified gravity, yet it was not with anger. "You have done wrong," he said; "but, since it is so, call him to my presence. All you ladies and gentlemen around shall judge if I deal harshly with him."

There was a pretty girl standing not far from the king, and close between her own mother and the interpreter of the ambassadors from Siam. We have spoken of her before, under the name of Annette de Marville; and while she had remained in that spot, her eyes had more than once involuntarily filled with tears. She was timid and retiring in her nature; and as the Duke of Montausier turned away to obey the king, every one was surprised to hear her voice raised sufficiently loud to reach even the ear of Louis himself, saying to the interpreter, "Tell them that they are now going to see how magnanimously the king will pardon one who has offended him."

The king looked another way; but it was evident to those who were accustomed to watch his countenance, that he connected the words he had just heard with the humiliation he had inflicted on the Doge of Genoa, and that the contrast struck and pleased him not a little.

In a very short time, before this impression had at all faded away, the door again opened, and the Duke of Montausier re-entered with the Count of Morseiul. The latter was pale, but perfectly firm and composed. He did not wear his sword, but he carried it sheathed in his hand; and, advancing directly towards Louis, he bent one knee before the king, at the same time laying down the weapon at the monarch's feet.

"Sire," he said, without rising, "I have brought you a sword, which for more than ten years was drawn in every campaign in your majesty's service. It has, unfortunately, been drawn against you: and that it has been so, and at the very moment when your majesty had a right to expect gratitude at my hands, is the bitterest recollection of my life; so bitter indeed, so horrible, so painful, that the moment I discovered the terrible error into which I had been hurried, the moment that I discovered that I owed my liberation to your majesty, I

instantly determined, whatever might be the result of the events that were then taking place, to surrender myself, unconditionally, to your majesty's pleasure; to embrace no means of escape; to reject every opportunity of flight; and if your indignation so far overcame your mercy as to doom me to death, to submit to it, not alone with courage, which every man in your majesty's service possesses, but with perfect resignation to your royal will."

The words, the manner, the action, all pleased the king, and the countenance with which he looked upon the young nobleman was by no means severe.

"You have, I fear, greatly erred, Monsieur de Morseiul," he replied. "But still I believe you have been much misled. Is there any favour that you have to ask me?"

The count gazed up in the king's face, still kneeling; and every head was bent forward, every ear listened eagerly. A momentary pause followed, as if there was a great struggle within him; and then he answered, "Sire, I will not ask my life of your majesty—not from any false pride, for I feel and acknowledge that it is yours to give or to take, but because my conduct, however much it might originate in mistake, must appear so ungrateful to you that you cannot, at this moment, feel I deserve your mercy. The only favour I will ask, then, is this: that, should I be brought to a trial, which must end, as I know, inevitably in my fall, you will read every word of my deposition, and I therein promise to give your majesty a full and true account, without the falsification of a single word, of all that has taken place in this last lamentable business."

Louvois took a half step forward as if to speak, and not a little anxiety was upon his countenance. But, contrary to the general impression of those present, all that the count had said had pleased the king; though his latter words had not a little alarmed the minister, who knew that truths might be displayed which he was most anxious to conceal.

"Monsieur de Morseiul," replied the king, "I will promise what you ask, at all events. But what you have said has pleased me, for it shows that you understand my spirit towards my subjects, and that I can grant without being asked. Your life, sir, is given to you. What punishment we shall inflict may perhaps

depend upon the sentence of a judicial court or of our council."

"May it please your majesty," said Louvois, stepping forward, "to hear me one moment. You have, perhaps, thought me inimical to Monsieur de Morseiul; but such, indeed, is not the case; and I would propose, that instead of subjecting him to any trial at all, you at once pronounce sentence of banishment upon him, which is all the mercy that he can expect. His estates, as ought to be the case, must be forfeited to the crown."

"And he driven forth," said the king, "to employ his military talents in the service of our enemies."

"Never, never, never, sire!" exclaimed the count, clasping his hands eagerly. "Never should my sword be drawn against my native land. I would rather beg my bread in misery, from door to door; I would rather live in want and die in sorrow, than do so base an act!"

There was truth and zeal upon his countenance, and Louvois urged what he had proposed; but while he was addressing the monarch in a lower tone, one of the side doors of the hall opened, and a lady came partly in, speaking to some one behind her, as if she knew not that any one was in the hall. The moment that she perceived her mistake, Madame de Maintenon drew back; but the king advanced a step and besought her to come in.

"We want your presence much, madam," he said with a smile, "for we cannot decide upon what is to be done with this young culprit. But you seem in haste, and who is this with you? I have somewhere seen his face before."

The king might well fail to recognise the countenance of Jerome Riquet, for it was at that moment actually cadaverous in appearance, from the various emotions that were going on in his heart.

"I was at that moment seeking your majesty," said Madame de Maintenon, advancing with her usual calm grace, "and was passing this way to your cabinet, to crave an audience ere you went out. But I thought the ceremony of the day was over."

"What are your commands, madam?" said the king. "Your wishes are to be attended to at all times."

"You know, sir," she said, "that I am not fond of ever asking one, who is only over generous to his servants, for anything. But I was eager at that moment to beseech your majesty to grant at once your pardon

to this unfortunate man, who some time ago committed a great crime in misapplying your majesty's handwriting, and who has now just committed another, for which I understand the officers of justice are in pursuit of him, though the swiftness of the horse which brought him here has enabled him to escape for the moment. He found out my apartments, I knew not how, and I brought him instantly to your majesty as soon as I had heard his story and read this paper."

"What is this paper?" demanded the king, taking it; "ticketed, I see, in the hand of Monsieur de la Reynie, 'Letter from the said Herval to the Sieur de Hatréaumont!' How come you possessed of this, sirrah?"

Riquet advanced and knelt before the king, while Louvois suddenly seemed to recollect some business and retired from the circle. "Sire," said the valet, in the briefest possible terms, "in serving my master I was taken by your majesty's forces, shut up in a barn with some wounded prisoners, heard the well-known leader, Herval, confess to the Chevalier d'Evran that he had written a letter to the traitor Hatréaumont, regarding his having been prevented from murdering your majesty by the Count de Morseiul (in which prevention I had some little share). The man died before his words could be taken down. The Chevalier d'Evran said it did not signify, for you would believe his evidence. But the Chevalier d'Evran was killed. My word, I knew, would not be believed; but I heard that the papers of Hatréaumont were to be burned this day by the common hangman, opposite the Bastile.* I had a swift horse saddled. I got close to the fire. I fixed my eyes upon the papers one by one as they were thrown in, till, seeing the writing of Herval, I seized the letter, and galloped hither as hard as I could. This is my tale, sire, and on my word it is true."

The king hastily opened the paper and read the contents, the expression of his countenance changing several times as he proceeded. But, when he had done, he turned towards the count, saying, "Monsieur de Morseiul, I require no one now to advise me how to act towards you. You are freely and entirely pardoned. I have given up the hope again of ever seeing you cast away the errors of your faith. But even that must not

* The papers of Hatréaumont were preserved for some time after his death, in order to give light in regard to the guilt of his accomplices.

make me harsh towards the man who has saved my life. I would only fain know how it was that you did not inform me of this at the time?"

"Sire," replied the count, "I came to your majesty for the purpose. Your majesty must remember that I told you that I had matters of deep importance to communicate. You referred me to Monsieur de Louvois, and, as I was proceeding to his house, I was arrested. In the Bastile I was allowed to communicate with no one, and the rest you know."

"We have been all very unfortunate, count," replied the king. "However, I trust that these embarrassments are at an end. You have your free pardon for the past, and now for the future. I cannot violate in your favour the laws that I have laid down for the regulation of the land, and for the establishment of one general religion throughout the country. If you stay in France, you, with others, lose the means of exercising the ceremonies of your sect. But, as I said to the Count de Schomberg, I say to you: in consideration of the great services that you have rendered, I will allow you to sell all your possessions if you choose to retire to another land, and this is, I fear, all I can do."

"Your majesty overwhelms me with bounty," said the count; "but there are yet two favours that I would ask."

"What more?" said the king.

"One request is, sire," said the count, "to be allowed once in every year to present myself before your majesty; and the other, that I may retain the chateau and the immediate grounds around it belonging to my ancestors. Thus every fond recollection that I have attached to France will still be gratified; and, though in exile, I shall live a Frenchman to the last."

"Your request is granted," replied the king, with a smile. "And now, gentlemen and ladies, as by your faces round I judge you are all well satisfied, we will not detain you longer."

Thus saying, Louis turned and withdrew.

Ere the Count of Morseiul retired from the room, and before any of his friends therein could speak with him, Madame de Maintenon said a word in his ear in a low voice.

"Go to the hotel of the British ambassador," she said. "You will there find those that you do not expect."

The heart of the Count of Morseiul beat high. He

had words of gratitude to speak to many there present; but, as soon as that was done, he hurried to Paris without a moment's pause; and in a few minutes clasped Clémence de Marly to a joyful heart.

We need not tell here the brief story she related of her flight from the coast of France to London; and of her having found an affectionate parent in one who, by the wiles of an artful second wife and an intriguing priest, had been persuaded to leave his children, by a first marriage with a Protestant lady, to the charge of her Catholic relations in France, and to the care of the king of that country. Louis had become the godfather of the eldest (known to us as the Chevalier d'Evran), while the earl himself was in exile during the troubles of the great rebellion. A Catholic himself, the earl had been easily induced to believe that his children's salvation depended upon their being educated in a Catholic country, even though concealed there from Protestant relations by assumed names. But, on the death of his second wife, all his feelings of natural affection returned; and during an illness, which made him believe that he was on his deathbed, he sent his brother to seek and bring back his children. We need not enter into the detail any farther. The reader can and will imagine it all. All that remains to be said is, that Clémence, in her eagerness, had easily persuaded that parent, whose only child she now was—for the three which had sprung from the second marriage had not survived—to hasten over to Paris, invested with every authority from the king, with whom his religion rendered him a favourite, to solicit the pardon of the Count of Morseiul. In consequence of the considerable round the count was obliged to take in his journey to the capital, and the difficulty of obtaining an audience of the king, she had arrived the day before his fate was finally decided.

The only part of that fate which could yet be doubtful was now in her hands; and if the King of France had shown himself merciful to the Count de Morseiul, she showed herself devoted to him through life, making him as happy as the combination of the rarest qualities of mind and person with the noblest, and the deepest, and the dearest qualities of the heart, could make such a man as we have endeavoured to depict the Huguenot.

THE END.